



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**THE RUSSIAN-EUROPEAN UNION COMPETITION IN  
UKRAINE**

by

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June 2015

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**THE RUSSIAN-EUROPEAN UNION COMPETITION IN UKRAINE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Ukraine crisis underway since November 2013 is a significant occurrence in a greater debate over what norms will prevail in the European—and global—security environment. The roots of the crisis lie in two-and-a-half decades of competition for influence in Ukraine by the European Union and the Russian Federation. The competition between Russia and the EU over Ukraine has evolved significantly since Ukraine became independent in 1991. This thesis shows that the European Union’s level of awareness of and competition with Russia for influence in Ukraine has significantly grown. Ukraine’s position in EU diplomacy has grown from secondary status to being regarded as a critical interest across EU institutions and member state governments. While Russian efforts to establish dominant influence in Ukraine have also intensified, Moscow’s interest in Ukraine has been consistently high. The findings of this thesis indicate that the European Union has not given up on Ukraine nor accepted the legitimacy of a Russian “sphere of influence” in post-Soviet states. Competition between Russia and the European Union over Ukraine is likely to intensify and remain at a high level for the foreseeable future.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AA	Association Agreement
AP	Action Plan
BRK-CU	Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan Customs Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
ENP	European Neighborhood Policy
EU	European Union
EUBAM	European Union Border Assistance Mission
GUAM	Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PCA	Partnership and Cooperation Agreement
SES	Single Economic Space
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Ukraine's current prominence is not a fleeting curiosity. Ukrainian territory has been influenced by both East and West throughout the centuries. Western Ukraine has been historically linked to the Habsburg Empire and Poland, while the eastern provinces and Crimea were traditionally part of the Russian Empire.<sup>1</sup> The region was the prize of Germany's brief triumph during the Great War. The 1918 treaty of Brest-Litovsk created for the first time an independent Ukraine, designed to be a vassal state of the German Empire. The independence of Ukraine did not survive long after Germany's defeat as the fledgling Soviet Union seized the opportunity to reassert Moscow's control over the strategic area. Ukraine was among the most vicious battlefields of the Second World War. The struggle for control reached such high levels of violence that the lands contested by Germany and Russia have been dubbed Europe's "blood lands."<sup>2</sup> The end of the Cold War and Ukraine's attainment of independence has not signaled the end of the region's allure for the East or the West; these events have merely changed the circumstances. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has again loosened Russia's grip on the region while the growth of the European Union has created greater prospects for Ukraine to become more integrated with Western Europe than ever before.

As the European Union expands and Russia reasserts itself, Ukraine has become a tantalizing prize in a contest between competing normative, political, and economic models. The European Union paradigm includes Ukraine within the broader European community, a membership not necessarily defined by formal institutional integration into the European Union itself but rather by the establishment of liberal norms, mutually compatible legal regimes, and multilateral engagement.<sup>3</sup> Russia, meanwhile, regards

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<sup>1</sup>Filippos Proedrou, "Ukraine's foreign policy: accounting for Ukraine's Indeterminate stance between Russia and the West," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10 no. 4 (2010): 452.

<sup>2</sup>Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010): viii.

<sup>3</sup>Hannes Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," *College of Europe Natolin Research Papers* (April 2011): 5–6.

Ukraine as a region of vital sovereign interest where increasing linkages with the European Union can only result in a weakening of Russian influence.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis investigates EU and Russian policy in this competition. Specifically, the thesis assesses the level of competition between the European Union and Russia over Ukraine from an external standpoint as well as how Ukraine has been regarded as an object of value internally by Brussels and Moscow. To what extent have the strategies, motivations, and levels of competition remained constant or evolved over time? What have been the various instruments employed by Moscow and Brussels? What have been the effects of the competition on Ukrainian politics and foreign policies? The EU's instruments include democracy promotion and measures designed to deepen economic and political cooperation, while Russia's tools encompass its control over energy resources, its military assets, and its ability to gain support from ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine.

#### **A. SIGNIFICANCE OF RUSSIA-EU COMPETITION OVER UKRAINE**

To describe the headline grabbing standoff in Ukraine since November 2013 as the result of cartoonish Russian imperialism or nostalgia for the old Soviet days is too simple. Both Russian and European Union policies in the Ukraine crisis have been shaped by two and a half decades of interaction conducted in the geopolitical landscape of former communist regimes. A number of issues are directly relevant. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity were affirmed by Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States in the Budapest Memorandum of 1994.<sup>5</sup> In the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, Russia and the NATO allies professed an intention to establish a cooperative security environment and constructive dialogue.<sup>6</sup> The failure of this environment to materialize must be examined. The Kosovo conflict is one major point of friction. The

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<sup>4</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 65.

<sup>5</sup>United Nations Security Council, "Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection With Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," United Nations, 19 December 1994, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/765](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/49/765).

<sup>6</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 27 May 1997, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_25468.htm).



European Union has deeply invested both financially and politically in the Balkans, a region that Russia regards as part of its sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup> The European Union countries have asserted that Russia's behavior in the Balkans and the post-Soviet space, and Moscow's refusal to cooperate in partnership initiatives, represents a lack of commitment to the shared security paradigm. Many Russians, meanwhile, regard EU and NATO expansion as being aimed directly at the interests of their state.<sup>8</sup> The Russian-Georgian war in 2008 threatened the established precedent of inviolate territorial integrity in Europe, and Russia's behavior in Crimea in 2014 has established a trend in this regard that has affected EU-Russian interactions. The competitive trend of EU-Russian relations has major significance for Ukraine in particular.

There is evidence to suggest that Russia views Ukraine as a pivotal arena in a contest between Russia and the West. Russians have made an effort to establish a unique Eurasian ideology in clear competition with the liberal democratic model favored in European Union and NATO nations.<sup>9</sup> Strategically, Russians regard international politics as a zero sum game and see increased Western influence on their periphery as a limitation on their own influence.<sup>10</sup> The conviction of ideological superiority and realist power politics combine to give Russia strong motivations to establish itself as the most influential actor in Ukraine.

Russia has had a continuous strategic engagement in Ukraine due to its proximity, its armaments manufacturers, and the presence of the Black Sea Fleet at the Sevastopol naval base. Russia has nevertheless had a low level of institutional linkages with Ukraine. Neither the Commonwealth of Independent States nor the proposed Eurasian Economic Union has produced significant Russian influence in Ukraine. Russia has preferred to deal directly with pro-Kremlin elites. The Crimean annexation and the presence of Russian military forces supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine represent a novel

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<sup>7</sup>Mark Webber, "The Kosovo War: A Recapitulation," *International Affairs* 85 no.3 (2009): 457.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Rühle, *NATO Enlargement and Russia: Die-Hard Myths and Real Dilemmas* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 15 May 2014): 1–2.

<sup>9</sup>Alexander Lukin, "Eurasian Integration and the Clash of Values," *Survival* 56 no.3 (2014): 51–52.

<sup>10</sup>David S. Yost, *NATO's Balancing Act* (Washington, DC: United States Institute For Peace, 2014): 355.

evolution of hard power employment in Russia's competition for influence.<sup>11</sup> The actions of Russian military forces in Ukraine since February 2014 have escalated the competition to a new level and may represent a shift in Moscow's desired endgame in Ukraine. Moscow's interest in protecting Russian-speakers and ethnic Russians outside Russia's borders has been asserted by President Putin, most notably in his speech to the Duma on the annexation of Crimea.<sup>12</sup> There is also ample evidence that Russia intends to establish a dominant military position in the post-Soviet space as leverage to prevent any further encroachment by the European Union on what it perceives as its legitimate sphere of influence.

The issues examined in this section make an understanding of Ukraine's role in Russian-EU relations highly valuable to policy makers—and indeed to anyone affected by European security, economic, or diplomatic developments. The significance of this thesis has been underscored by the outbreak of an international crisis in Ukraine beginning in November 2013, and escalating with the February 2014 decision by President Viktor Yanukovych to leave the country. The crisis continues at the time of this writing. Top level officials have already asserted that Russian behavior in Ukraine since the crisis began marks a major shift in relations between the West and Russia. Carl Bildt, then the Swedish Foreign Minister, wrote in July 2014 that “the invasion, occupation, and annexation of Crimea was a clear violation of fundamental principles of European security and international law.”<sup>13</sup> This sentiment has been echoed by other leaders in the EU. European Council President Donald Tusk called Russia “a strategic problem” in November 2014, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Russia's strategy in Ukraine called the “entire European peace order into question.”<sup>14</sup> This thesis is intended

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<sup>11</sup>Igor Sutyagin, *Russian Forces in Ukraine* (London: Royal United Services Institute, March 2015): 4.

<sup>12</sup>Vladimir Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” The Kremlin, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>.

<sup>13</sup>Carl Bildt, “Putin's Credibility Lies Amid the Wreckage of Flight MH17,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/ea355436-0e61-11e4-a1ae-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3CySX1lmO>.

<sup>14</sup>Valentina Pop, “Junker calls Putin's bluff on South Stream,” *Euobserver* December 4, 2014, <http://www.euobserver.com/foreign/126792>; Andrew Rettman, “Merkel: Russia cannot veto EU expansion,” *Euobserver* November 17, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/126540>.

to contribute to an understanding of how the Ukraine crisis has affected the evolution of EU-Russian relations and to help illuminate the issues at stake in the continuing crisis.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is a plethora of literature dealing with the relationship between the European Union and Russia in general, with some works dedicated to how Ukraine figures into the diplomatic equation. The literature, as it addresses the full range of functions and interactions conducted by states and a supranational institution (the European Union), analyzes a wide range of themes, causal factors and trends. However, schools of thought regarding EU-Russian competition, and Ukraine's role in the interactions between the EU and Russia, can be parsed out. One school is adamant that competition between the European Union and Russia is inevitable, and holds that both parties are aggressively seeking to bolster their influence. Another set of experts argues that the European Union is not interested in competition with Russia and is willing to concede where EU interests conflict with Russian objectives in Ukraine. The literature on Ukraine itself is divided between two major positions. One argument is that Ukraine is committed to pursuing a pro-Western policy and seeks to deliberately distance itself from Russia. The second school argues that Ukraine favors neither the European Union nor Russia over the other, and that it has consistently pursued a balanced policy aimed at maintaining independence and constructive engagement with both powers.

A common position in the literature is the assertion that there is an explicit competition between the European Union and Russia over Ukraine specifically and the post-Soviet space in general.<sup>15</sup> Analysts advance several arguments as evidence of overt competition. Russia, it is argued, perceives the EU's liberal norms and institutional creep as a concerted effort to block Russian influence in former communist territories.<sup>16</sup> In response, proponents of the competition position argue that Russian diplomacy in so

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<sup>15</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 7.

<sup>16</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 19; Stephen Blank and Younkyoo Kim, "Moscow versus Brussels: Rival Integration Projects in the Balkans," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25 no. 2 (Spring 2014): 70–71; Ioana Reiber, "Geopolitical Games Between Russia and EU: Ukraine and Moldova," *The International Annual Scientific Session Strategies XXI* (2014), 340–341.

called “frozen conflicts” in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space has been designed to weaken liberal regimes and prevent the European Union’s values and standards from taking root.<sup>17</sup> In this interpretation, Russia’s behavior, especially in 2014, is aimed at the “strategic denial” of Ukraine to the West, by destabilizing any Ukrainian regime friendly to the EU and its norms while positioning Russia to dominate the security situation by controlling the pace of conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Authors supporting the competition interpretation have identified many instances where Russia has leveraged its state power to influence Ukraine. Russian tools include CIS treaties, withholding energy supplies to apply political pressure, links between the Russian state and pro-Russian political parties, and military intervention.<sup>19</sup>

Moscow has also sought to construct a legal narrative that justifies Russian intervention and that obstructs the European Union. Examples include the Russian position that Yanukovych’s replacement by a new acting President and the subsequent election of Petro Poroshenko were illegal steps. Moscow asserts that Crimea has legitimately become part of the Russian Federation through a democratic referendum process.<sup>20</sup> The aim of Russia’s legal narrative is to muddle the issue among potential adversaries with strong commitments to adhering to international law and liberal norms—chiefly the European Union—and hamper efforts by these states to form a consensus opposing Russian behavior.<sup>21</sup>

Russia also contends that it has a responsibility to “protect the rights of Russians unfortunate enough to live outside the borders of the Russian Federation.”<sup>22</sup> Observers

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<sup>17</sup>Blank and Kim, “Moscow versus Brussels,” 63.

<sup>18</sup>Roy Allison, “Russian ‘Deniable’ Intervention in Ukraine: How and Why Russia Broke the Rules,” *International Affairs* 90 no. 6 (2014): 1269–1271.

<sup>19</sup>Antoaneta Dimitrova and Rilka Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance: Interdependence with Russia and the CIS as Limits to the EU’s rule transfer in the Ukraine,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 16 no. 6 (2009): 858, 866; Reiber, “Geopolitical Games,” 339; Proedru, “Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” 451.

<sup>20</sup>Allison, “Russian ‘Deniable’ Intervention,” 1260–1262.

<sup>21</sup>Allison, “Russian ‘Deniable’ Intervention,” 1259.

<sup>22</sup>Lawrence Freedman, “Ukraine and the Art of Limited War,” *War on the Rocks* October 11, 2014, 4, <http://warontherocks.com/2014/10/ukraine-and-the-art-of-limited-war/>.

note that the ethnic dimension of Russian diplomacy often serves as a justification for intervention abroad to enhance Moscow's geopolitical power.<sup>23</sup>

The European Union's drive to compete for Ukraine is seen as motivated primarily by economic reasons with a strong normative dimension. The literature identifies programs such as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership (EAP) as designed to promote economic development and political stability with potential partners on the EU periphery.<sup>24</sup> EU agreements with Ukraine have tightened the mutual economic connections, enabling an increased flow of labor from Ukraine to the EU through visa agreements, and an expanded volume of goods through a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA).<sup>25</sup> Some experts argue that these developments constitute evidence of deliberate competition by the EU with Russia because the EU-Ukraine agreements are incompatible with the Russian-sponsored CIS and Eurasian Union Single Economic Space, and that they are pursued despite vocal Russian objections.<sup>26</sup> As some commentators observe, the European Union has been drawn into competition by Ukraine itself. Demands from Ukraine and other Eastern European countries motivated the EU's creation of the ENP, and the dissatisfaction of Ukrainian elites with the ENP process was identified as a driver behind the development of the EAP framework.<sup>27</sup>

The school of thought discerning a lack of competition between the European Union and Russia over Ukraine focuses mainly on a lack of interest, or will, to compete by the EU. There is some discussion of conciliatory Russian diplomacy, but in the

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<sup>23</sup>Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention," 1285; Freedman, "Ukraine and the Art of Limited War," 4.

<sup>24</sup>Alexandra Shapovalova, "Political Implications of the Eastern Partnership for Ukraine: A Basis for Rapprochement or Deepening the Rift in Europe," *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 10 no. 3 (2010): 71, 74.

<sup>25</sup>Simion Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations and the Eastern Partnership: Challenges, Progress, and Potential," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16 no. 2 (2011): 267; Peter Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit: Milestone in EU-Russia Relations – Not Just For Ukraine," *Danube Law and Economics Review* 5 no. 1 (2014): 22.

<sup>26</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 858; Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit," 23–25.

<sup>27</sup>Shapovalova, "Political Implications," 76.

context of Russia needing to compromise with the EU due to its size and importance as an energy market and source of investment, rather than in reference to the EU's supposed unwillingness to compete.<sup>28</sup>

In the case of the European Union, however, several propositions are advanced to demonstrate an avoidance of competition over Ukraine. A common idea in the literature is that the EU carefully designs its engagement with Ukraine to avoid competition with Russian interests.<sup>29</sup> The EU motivations to do so are attributed to the importance of economic and energy links between the EU and Russia, respect for Ukrainian ties to Russia, and an unwillingness to create instability that could negatively impact the security environment.<sup>30</sup>

Another recurrent theme in much of the literature is an empirical argument that the EU is not competing with Russia over Ukraine because the EU has never extended the possibility of accession to the European Union.<sup>31</sup> The EU is unwilling to entertain the notion of Ukrainian membership because of concerns that Ukraine does not meet EU standards in areas such as human rights, political development, and economic stability.<sup>32</sup> For Ukraine's part, eventual accession to the European Union is deemed the primary motivating factor behind its engagement with the EU.<sup>33</sup> Therefore—the argument runs—the EU's steadfast refusal to discuss accession reflects an unwillingness to compete because it ignores Ukraine's core interests.

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<sup>28</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighborhood," 36; Shaplova, "Political Implications," 75.

<sup>29</sup>Shaplova, "Political Implications," 74; Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 265–266; Richard Youngs, "A Door Neither Closed Nor Open: EU Policy Towards Ukraine During and Since the Orange Revolution," *International Politics* 46 no. 4 (2009): 371.

<sup>30</sup>Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit," 25; Youngs, "Door Neither Closed Nor Open," 366; Ostap Odushkin, "The Acceptance of Ukraine to the European Union: Integrating and Disintegrating Factors for the EU," *Polish Sociological Review* 136 no. 4 (2001): 370.

<sup>31</sup>Youngs, "Door Neither Closed Nor Open," 361; Dimitrova and Dragneva "Constraining External Governance," 855.

<sup>32</sup>Linus Linkevičius, "The European Neighbourhood Policy towards Ukraine," *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review* 21 (2008): 66; Paul Kubick, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism: Ukraine After the Orange Revolution," *Democratization* 16 no. 2 (2009): 326.

<sup>33</sup>Kataryna Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination: The Impact of EU Conditionality on Ukraine under the European Neighbourhood Policy," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 no. 2 (2009): 208.

The literature on Ukraine and its government's approach to the European Union and Russia includes differing assessments. In some circles it is argued that Ukraine is seeking closer ties with the European Union at the expense of Russian influence. Arguments to this effect highlight several facts. Ukraine after the Orange Revolution aligned politically with the EU on many foreign policy issues, including the Transnistria issue, and joined or expanded cooperation with organizations designed to limit Russian influence such as the GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) Group and NATO.<sup>34</sup> Other than security assurances offered in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum (violated by Russia in 2014), Ukraine has no formal security guarantees and sees deeper integration with the West as a way to enhance its security.<sup>35</sup> The European Union is also a major Ukrainian trade partner, and the EU offers the greatest prospects for growth in trade, investment, and employment opportunities for Ukrainian citizens.<sup>36</sup> Closer ties with the European Union would enable Ukraine to pursue greater economic independence from Russia, especially since the CIS has sometimes been used to pressure Ukraine into supporting Russian policies.<sup>37</sup>

While scholars do not deny that Ukraine has an interest in the European Union and has consistently pursued engagement with Brussels, some observers maintain that Ukraine since independence has sought to balance relations with the EU and Russia, favoring neither.<sup>38</sup> The population of Ukraine is ethnically divided. A large ethnic Russian minority consists of people that view themselves as Ukrainian citizens while looking to Russia for cultural leadership.<sup>39</sup> The influential Party of Regions is strongly

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<sup>34</sup>Dimitrova And Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 862; Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 449.

<sup>35</sup>Reiber, "Geopolitical Games," 341.

<sup>36</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 267–268; Havlik, "Vilnius Summit Eastern Partnership," 29–30; Linkevičius, "European Neighbourhood Policy," 68.

<sup>37</sup>Odushkin, "Acceptance of Ukraine, 373. Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 863.

<sup>38</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 451.

<sup>39</sup>Stephen Shulman, "Competing Versus Complementary Identities: Ukrainian-Russian Relations and the Loyalties of Russians in Ukraine," *Nationalities Papers* 26 no. 4(1998): 6.

identified with Russia ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and politically, and it receives funding from Russia.<sup>40</sup>

Aside from the ethnic aspect of the equation, Russia has vital economic importance to Ukraine. Many Ukrainian elites have expressed pro-Russian sympathies despite their nationality.<sup>41</sup> Russia remains Ukraine's largest trade partner after the European Union and an important source of investment. Politically, there is ample evidence of Ukraine taking care to placate Russian interests. As early as 2003, Ukraine worked to maintain economic ties with Russia, expressing interest in the Russia-sponsored Single Economic Space.<sup>42</sup> Despite the Orange Revolution and the advent of the ENP, Ukraine failed to make major political and economic reforms to align with the EU model under the ENP.<sup>43</sup>

After the tide of pro-Western sentiment evident in the 2004 Orange Revolution receded, Ukraine undertook several measures to reassure Russia. The literature highlights political developments during the administration of pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich. In 2006, discussions over Ukraine's membership in the Single Economic Space were reopened.<sup>44</sup> After Yanukovich's election to Ukraine's presidency in 2010, integration progress with the EU under the Eastern Partnership ground to a halt, while there was a marked growth in pro-Russian policies, including abandonment of NATO aspirations by Ukraine.<sup>45</sup> In response to the stick of Russian pressure, and the carrot of a Russian gas deal and major loan, Yanukovich abandoned an Association Agreement and free trade deal with the EU in November 2013.<sup>46</sup> Literature dealing with how the resulting crisis may affect Ukrainian intentions to maintain a balance between the EU and Russia is comparatively scarce. This thesis seeks to contribute to filling that gap.

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<sup>40</sup>Kubicek, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism," 333; Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 449, 452.

<sup>41</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 451.

<sup>42</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighbourhood Policy," 79.

<sup>43</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 188.

<sup>44</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 201.

<sup>45</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 264–265.

<sup>46</sup>Reiber, "Geopolitical Games," 338.



There is little literature that deals specifically with measuring trends in the competition over Ukraine and the strategies employed in this rivalry. This thesis makes a contribution by identifying these trends and helping to assess how the level of competition between the European Union and Russia has changed, and by investigating why. There is also little scholarship to date dealing directly with the conflict in Ukraine resulting from the 2013 rejection by President Viktor Yanukovych of the EU association agreement and how it has affected Russian-EU competition over the country. While at the time of this writing the crisis is not resolved, placing the events in the competition since November 2013 in context with historical trends may contribute to a more informed understanding of current issues.

### **C. POTENTIAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE COMPETITION**

Several defensible hypotheses could be advanced to assess and explain EU-Russia competition over Ukraine. Thematically, potential explanations can be broken down into two overarching groups. Starting with the hypothesis that the EU and Russia are engaged in a competition over Ukraine, one could posit that the levels of competition between Brussels and Moscow have remained constant since Ukrainian independence. This hypothesis could draw on the consistency demonstrated in Ukrainian expressions of interest in EU membership, and Russian consistency in attempting to maintain influence in the post-Soviet space. Another subset of this explanatory model could argue that levels of competition between the EU and Russia began at a low point following Ukrainian independence in 1991, and trended toward increasing intensity through 2014 to the present moment. This explanation could be supported through a detailed examination of Brussels' evolving engagement programs with Ukraine. Kiev's troubled history within the CIS, recurrent economic and energy conflicts with Moscow, and the political polarization sparked by the annexation of Crimea also contribute to strengthening the case for this hypothesis. Increasing Russian efforts to develop an integration model to serve as an alternative to the EU, including the CIS, the Single Economic Space, and the Eurasian Economic Union, also fit into this argument.

The other major explanatory hypothesis argues that the European Union and Russia are not engaged in competition over Ukraine. The literature review identified a school of interpretation arguing that the European Union is not seeking to bring Kiev into its orbit, or to challenge Russian interests in Ukraine. This argument relies on the European Union's historical unwillingness to consider Ukraine a candidate for accession to the EU, the "take it or leave it" nature of Brussels' diplomacy, and an investigation of instances in which the EU tempered its engagement with Ukraine to avoid interfering with Russian interests. A related hypothesis could posit that Ukraine has moved firmly into the Russian sphere of influence, and that therefore the EU is unable to compete. Kiev's susceptibility to Moscow's pressure in the energy and economic sectors, as well as its vulnerability to Russia's military power and strategy of ethnic politics, fit well within this framework.

#### **D. HYPOTHESIS**

Russia and the European Union have taken different paths in their relations with Ukraine. The variations in the interests and diplomatic strategies of the EU and Russia reflect incongruent levels of competition by the two entities over Ukraine. The European Union has evolved from a low level of competition over Ukraine to placing an increasingly high priority on securing influence over the country. Russia, meanwhile, has consistently had a high interest in competition in order to establish hegemonic influence over Ukraine—although the Russian state has not always been as capable of acting on that interest as it has been in recent years. Ukraine has historically fueled this competition by avoiding irreversible commitment to either the EU or the Russian Federation. Kiev has an interest in the economic opportunities, democratic values, and security offered by membership in the European Union. Ukraine also has lasting, vital ties to Russia stemming from its long time status as a province of the Russian Empire and republic of the Soviet Union, as well as a significant ethnic Russian population cementing cultural ties to the East.

Ukraine's attempt to sustain a balancing act between East and West has intensified the competition over time. The Ukraine crisis beginning in November 2013,

however, has changed the dynamic by influencing Ukraine to firmly embrace the European Union and diminish its links with Russia. This thesis examines the interests, strategies, and events that have informed how the European Union, Russia, and Ukraine have approached the competition.

## **E. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis is organized with three major chapters: the European Union-Ukraine relationship, the Russia-Ukraine relationship, and an analysis of the competition. Chapter II seeks to identify EU interests in Ukraine, the ways in which the EU has interacted with Ukraine, and trends in the levels of interest that the EU has demonstrated in Ukraine. Special attention is devoted to how the European Union has reacted to Russian activities in Ukraine. Chapter III examines Russian interests in Ukraine, the tools Russia leverages to exert influence, and how Russian behavior toward Ukraine fits into the broader scope of Russian competition with the EU. Chapter IV focuses on Ukraine's place in the broader interactions between the EU and Russia. This chapter includes an analysis of how Ukrainian politics and choices have affected the competition between the European Union and Russia. The final chapter summarizes the conclusions.

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## II. THE EUROPEAN UNION AND UKRAINE

### A. INTRODUCTION

The European Union has an intense interest in expanding markets for its member states, as well as promoting the economic prosperity of trade partners throughout the world.<sup>47</sup> The EU has a major interest in Ukraine as the largest of the Soviet successor states—aside from Russia itself—on its border and a major energy corridor.<sup>48</sup> Ukraine is the European Union’s 24th largest trade partner, while the EU is a close second to Russia in trade with Ukraine, making closer relations mutually beneficial for both.<sup>49</sup>

The European Union also has an interest in normative engagement with all states on its borders.<sup>50</sup> The EU promotes democratic values, the rule of law, accountable governments, and economic prosperity to ensure the security and stability of its own member states. The major engagement incentive for Ukraine, and many of the states on the periphery of the European Union, is the prospect of EU membership.<sup>51</sup> The carrot of membership has permitted the European Union to pursue an engagement strategy of conditionality, demanding that bordering states adopt EU norms in exchange for limited tangible gains short of accession.

European Union diplomacy with Ukraine also began as a “take it or leave it” approach, reflecting a lack of awareness of Russian ambitions, or an unwillingness to compete with Russia for dominant influence in Ukraine. This state of affairs persisted until 2004, when the EU’s eastern expansion and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine

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<sup>47</sup>The institution now known as the European Union originated as the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. Interest in expanding economic cooperation between member states, and extending that cooperation to new members, has played a major role in the EU’s evolution to its current form.

<sup>48</sup>Kataryna Wolczuk, “Implementation Without Coordination: The Impact of EU Conditionality on Ukraine under the European Neighbourhood Policy,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 61 no. 2 (2009): 188.

<sup>49</sup>Simion Costea, “EU-Ukraine Relations and the Eastern Partnership: Challenges, Progress, and Potential,” *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16 no. 2 (2011): 268.

<sup>50</sup>Alexandra Shapovalova, “Political Implications of the Eastern Partnership for Ukraine: A Basis for Rapprochement or Deepening the Rift in Europe,” *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 10 no. 3 (2010): 71.

<sup>51</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance,” 855.

instigated a shift to a more attentive approach. In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, European Union policy has steadily evolved toward active attempts to court Ukraine, and increased awareness of the need to compete with Russia. This change in policy was not without internal controversy. Indeed, as this chapter shows, there has been a significant debate within the EU regarding its Ukraine policy since 2004. The overall consensus, however, has shifted in favor of competing to promote the European Union's influence in Ukraine.

## **B. EARLY ENGAGEMENT**

The European Union's initial relations with Ukraine established the trend of limited engagement that would prevail over the next decade. Following Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it received no direct attention from the EU. The only substantive interaction was a grant equivalent to 120 million euros as part of the European Union's Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program, which was based in Moscow.<sup>52</sup> Relations with Ukraine were so disorganized that an official EU delegation did not even open in Kiev until 1993, illustrating the low priority assigned to Ukraine at the time.<sup>53</sup> Ukraine, however, has long been interested in accession to the European Union. President Kuchma, leader of Ukraine from 1994 to 2005, frequently expressed support for EU membership and signed a decree formalizing that interest as a strategic goal in Luxembourg in 1998.<sup>54</sup>

Institutionalized engagement between the European Union and Ukraine grew throughout the 1990s, but without any significant increase of interest or active competition with Russia by the EU. Negotiations on a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) were completed in 1994, with full implementation achieved in 1998. The PCA represented Ukraine's first exposure to the EU's norms, values, and legal regime—sometimes referred to as its *acquis communautaire*.<sup>55</sup> Despite taking the step of

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<sup>52</sup>Fredo Arias-King, "The Genesis of the European Union's Relations with Ukraine and Belarus," *Demokratizatsiya* 14 no.4 (2006): 535.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 536.

<sup>54</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Cooperation," 192.

<sup>55</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 855.

a formal agreement, little progress on advancing relations was achieved by the PCA. The agreement lacked incentives from the Ukrainian point of view, in that it required a long list of domestic reforms with no promises from the EU in return.<sup>56</sup> Despite the lack of formal progress toward closer ties as a result of this agreement, the PCA did have long term value for EU influence in Ukraine. It established an institutionalized dialogue, consistently exposing Ukraine to EU norms and expectations.<sup>57</sup> Specialized departments for cooperation and adaptation to EU norms were also created within Ukrainian government ministries, laying the basic foundation for future integration.<sup>58</sup> It was also the first PCA achieved with a former republic of the Soviet Union, signaling that Ukraine had at least some unique level of significance to the European Union.

The years following the implementation of the PCA in 1998 and prior to the Orange Revolution in 2004 can be seen as a low point in the European Union's competitive approach toward relations with Ukraine. The EU did not invite Ukraine to the 1998 European Union Enlargement Conference held in London.<sup>59</sup> In 1999 the European Union and Ukraine agreed on a Common Strategy aimed at supporting Ukraine's democratic and economic development. This agreement, however, took over three years to be officially adopted in Ukraine, and it resulted in no substantial domestic reform or diplomatic gains with the European Union.<sup>60</sup> During this period domestic politics in Ukraine also drove the EU away from a strategy of pursuing closer engagement. Endemic corruption in Kuchma's government, and increasing limitations of political freedoms, including intimidation of the press, caused the EU to express "profound concerns," and cut off high level contact between European Union leaders and

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<sup>56</sup>Marek Dabrowski and Svitlana Taran, "The Free Trade Agreement Between the EU and Ukraine: Conceptual Background, Economic Context, and Potential Impact," *CASE Network Studies and Analyses* no. 437 (2012): 16.

<sup>57</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 855.

<sup>58</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Cooperation," 195.

<sup>59</sup>Andrew Wilson, *The Ukrainians: Unexpected Nation* (London: Yale University Press, 2009): 290.

<sup>60</sup>Paul Kubick, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism: Ukraine After the Orange Revolution," *Democratization* 16 no. 2 (2009): 337.

Ukrainian officials.<sup>61</sup> The withdrawal of high level political contact by the EU reflected a reluctance to continue even the dialogue established by the PCA, let alone compete for an increased stake in Ukraine's development. EU Commission President Romano Prodi even "suggested that Ukraine had as much chance of joining the EU as New Zealand."<sup>62</sup> In sum, prior to 2004 the EU had little interest in Ukrainian accession, preferring to proclaim its own norms with the expectation that Ukraine would adapt to them. When this outcome did not prevail, as demonstrated with the Kuchma Presidency, the European Union was content to withdraw high level contact and await reform.

### **C. EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY AND THE ORANGE REVOLUTION**

In 2004, the European Union enlarged from fifteen to twenty five states, with seven of the new members (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia) having formerly been members of the Soviet Bloc. In 2004 also Ukraine experienced a mass pro-democracy movement known as the Orange Revolution. These factors combined to change the diplomatic dynamic between Ukraine and the European Union. The EU's European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was designed as an overarching framework for engagement with all states in the European region not within the European Union. The ENP was not directed exclusively at Ukraine, but due to Ukraine's size and importance in Eastern Europe, it became a major object of ENP diplomacy.

An important factor in Ukraine's early prominence in the ENP framework was the presence of the new eastern members of the European Union. Poland was a strong advocate of prioritizing Ukrainian interests over Russian concerns in ENP diplomacy, and Lithuania sought to leverage the ENP to strengthen a bilateral partnership with Ukraine formed in 2002.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Richard Youngs, "A Door Neither Closed Nor Open: EU Policy Towards Ukraine During and Since the Orange Revolution," *International Politics* 46 no. 4 (2009): 360–361.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>63</sup>Youngs, "Door Neither Closed Nor Open," 362.



The ENP and the Orange Revolution were not directly linked, but the consequences of the Orange Revolution had a major influence on European Union diplomacy thereafter. As the ENP was the centerpiece of EU engagement with Ukraine until the introduction of the Eastern Partnership in 2009, an examination of the Orange Revolution must precede consideration of the ENP.

The European Neighborhood Policy was barely off the ground when the mass protests that would come to be known as the Orange Revolution began in November 2004. The Orange Revolution drew the EU toward more overt competition with Russia over Ukraine and sparked the first major internal EU debate over policy toward the country. The European Union became active in support of Ukraine's movement toward a more accountable and more democratic government. The Commission dispatched election observers to support the new rounds of elections that would eventually see Yushenko elected president. Reflecting the new dimension of European Union diplomacy brought about by the 2004 enlargement, the majority of observers were supplied by Poland and Slovakia. The European Union, via the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), was vocal in support of the power sharing constitutional compromise that resolved contention over a new round of elections.

These overt actions in support of Western-style democracy in Ukraine did not come without a debate within the EU. Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom were the strongest supporters of the Orange Revolution movement. France, Germany, Italy, and Spain expressed reservations to various degrees. French and German reluctance was based on concern over the implications for EU-Russian relations. The French government had no major interest in the Ukrainian question, and the French Foreign Minister at that time, Michel Barnier, expressed more concern over regional upheaval than support for the demonstrators.<sup>64</sup> Germany was in the midst of negotiating a gas deal with Russia, and was also slow to support the Orange Revolution. The European Union eventually unified in support of the Orange Revolution, but the debate demonstrated the evident concern

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<sup>64</sup>Youngs, "Door Neither Closed Nor Open," 364.

over Russian objections. Nevertheless, the European Union officially supported the pro-Western Orange Revolution despite awareness that it conflicted with Russian interests.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the increased interest in Ukrainian affairs demonstrated by EU support for the Orange Revolution, the performance of the ENP framework demonstrated a continuation of the trend of tentative engagement. The Ukraine-European Union Action Plan (AP) developed in February 2005 laid out 73 tasks to be performed with the goal of bringing Ukraine into line with EU standards.<sup>66</sup> Despite the demanding obligations assigned to Ukraine, there were no concrete incentives laid out in return, only nebulous promises of closer cooperation, and perhaps eventually integration. As a result, no substantial effort was undertaken to codify the requirements of the action plan in Ukrainian law.<sup>67</sup> Membership in the European Union was a concrete goal of the Ukrainian government under both the Kuchma and Yushchenko regimes, but accession was not an option on the table within the ENP framework. The unwillingness of European Union negotiators to extend this option created a disincentive for Ukrainian elites to push legislation to meet the AP tasks.<sup>68</sup>

Internal Ukrainian politics also share some responsibility for Ukraine's slow progress with respect to the AP. Ukraine was mired in political conflict between the Orange Coalition and Yanukovych's Party of Regions, and crippled by splits within the Orange Coalition itself. The European Union, however, failed to establish motivations for Ukraine to show unity and will to accomplish the Action Plan, evidencing the EU's lack of determination to compete for influence in Ukraine.<sup>69</sup> Persistent concern over Russian perceptions and reactions was in large part responsible for the EU's hesitancy. Richard Youngs argues that

in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution considerations relating to Russia reasserted themselves as the prominent influence over European

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<sup>65</sup>Youngs, "Door Neither Closed Nor Open," 363–366.

<sup>66</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 189.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 194–197.

<sup>68</sup>Kubicek, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism," 337.

<sup>69</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 451.

policies. One EU spokesman recognized that policy toward Ukraine was ‘increasingly caught up in debates over the best way to deal with Russia.’ . . . One Commission director admitted that concern over Russian energy supplies was the key reason why several member states were ‘slowing down’ on relations with Ukraine.<sup>70</sup>

While concerns about Russia were not the sole reason for the slow progress toward deepening relations with Ukraine through the ENP framework, the European Union’s desire to avoid the appearance of competition with Russia constrained Brussels’ diplomacy. The ENP framework nonetheless produced some advances in EU-Ukrainian relations and evidenced increasing European Union influence in Ukraine. A visa agreement was successfully negotiated, easing Ukrainian access to the Schengen Area, and perhaps more significantly, finally offering a concrete, if minor, benefit for Ukraine derived from its EU relations.<sup>71</sup>

The growth of Brussels’ influence has been evident in the foreign policy realm. By 2007 Ukraine had adopted 549 out of 589 CFSP declarations and 833 out of 907 policy statements.<sup>72</sup> Ukraine has also contributed to the EU Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), and contributed troops to NATO peacekeeping missions.<sup>73</sup> The closer alignment between Ukraine and the European Union in foreign policy issues is evidence of a significant shift toward the West. More telling in the context of EU-Russian competition was the increased attention given by President Yuschenko to the GUAM organization, established in 1997 by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova as “a pole that could stand up to Russia’s domineering policies.”<sup>74</sup>

All told the ENP era saw the European Union move toward more active influence in Ukraine by a matter of degrees. While the ENP resulted in an increased level of socialization with the EU and the growth of institutional linkages, the EU was careful to

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<sup>70</sup>Youngs, “Door Neither Closed Nor Open,” 371.

<sup>71</sup>Simon-Costea, “EU-Ukraine Relations,” 267.

<sup>72</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance,” 862.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 863.

<sup>74</sup>Proedrou, “Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” 449.

avoid overtly irritating Russian sensibilities. In 2006 Commission President Manuel Barroso explicitly stated that “Ukraine is not ready” for membership.<sup>75</sup> The ENP AP did establish obligations for Ukraine to meet, as opposed to the non-binding dialogue of the PCA. Despite the EU’s continued rejection of the prospect of membership, the events of the Orange Revolution and the framework established by the ENP created the foundation for deeper EU-Ukrainian relations and more explicit competition with Russia by the European Union.

#### **D. EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND THE DEEP AND COMPREHENSIVE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT**

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is an effort by the European Union to focus the broad goal of normative engagement and limited integration envisioned by the ENP toward the unique challenges of specific eastern European states. The evolution of the EaP was driven from within the EU by a desire to tailor integration strategies for states in the post-Soviet space, and by demands from non-EU Eastern European states for a more functional process responsive to their unique situations.<sup>76</sup> While the Eastern Partnership was conceived as a regional program, Ukraine was the centerpiece of the strategy. Consistent with the shift to Eastern-oriented EU activism triggered by the 2004 enlargement, Poland was the major EU sponsor of the EaP, with the specific goal of strengthening relations with Ukraine.<sup>77</sup> Designing an integration program centered around Ukraine indicated the increasing importance placed on gaining EU influence with Kiev. The EaP also held out credible possibilities to achieve major concrete gains for Ukraine: an Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). European Union diplomatic language continued to be sensitive to Russian perceptions during this period, but nonetheless the policies and negotiations within the EaP framework represented intensified EU-Russian competition in Ukraine.

The DCFTA, negotiated between 2008 and 2011, not only offered significant economic opportunity for Ukraine, but also promised to intensify legal and institutional

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<sup>75</sup>Youngs, “Door Neither Closed Nor Open,” 370.

<sup>76</sup>Shapovalova, “Political Implications,” 71.

<sup>77</sup>Simon Costea, “EU-Ukraine Relations,” 262–263.

integration in the EU's Single European Market. The European Union's experience with the enlargement process with its Eastern European states such as Poland indicated that countries joining the European Market can expect to experience economic modernization and significant growth in foreign direct investment.<sup>78</sup> The agreement extended beyond the elimination of tariff barriers and would integrate broad swaths of the Ukrainian economy into the European Union model, including investment policy, environmental regulations, competition rules, and dispute resolution.<sup>79</sup>

Politically, the implementation of the EU *acquis communautaire* would have created significant linkages between EU institutions and the Ukrainian ministries governing transportation, trade, energy, and justice.<sup>80</sup> The Association Agreement under negotiation through the EaP also promised to further reduce visa barriers and access to various EU-sponsored protocols, including education, cultural, and financial programs.<sup>81</sup> The prospect of accession to membership remained absent, but in contrast to the ENP AP, these tangible aspects of Eastern Partnership cooperation offered clear incentives to Ukraine, and indicated a marked shift toward competition with Russia on behalf of the EU.

The process of negotiating the agreements described in the preceding paragraphs also demonstrated a shift toward competition with Russia on behalf of the European Union. At the outset of negotiations over the DCFTA, the EU appeared to continue the historical trend of "take it or leave it" integration strategy. Andrey Ermolaev, Director of Ukraine's National Institute for Strategic Studies, observed that "European bureaucrats think that if Ukraine enters Europe, it should accept the European Rules. But . . . this is a large country, with a complex economical structure, and Europe must reckon with this."<sup>82</sup> Perhaps as a result, negotiations on the DCFTA stalled. The election to the Presidency of Yanukovych in February 2010 was accompanied by a pursuit of pro-Russian policies,

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<sup>78</sup>Peter Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit: Milestone in EU-Russia Relations – Not Just For Ukraine," *Danube Law and Economics Review* 5 no. 1 (2014): 28–29.

<sup>79</sup>Dabrowski and Taran, "The Free Trade Agreement," 6–7.

<sup>80</sup>Dimitrovna and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 860.

<sup>81</sup>Simon Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 271.

<sup>82</sup>Ermolaev quoted in Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 273.

such as the renewal of the Black Sea Fleet basing agreement, and a distancing from the West—including the enshrining in law of Ukraine’s non-aligned status.<sup>83</sup>

The European Union’s response to these developments was evidence of an active attempt to compete against Ukraine’s shift to the East. President Yanukovych was invited to Brussels in September 2010 to smooth relations ahead of the scheduled EU-Ukrainian Summit in November of that year, evidence of European Union attempts to reverse the pro-Russian trend of Ukrainian Policy.<sup>84</sup> The summit yielded conciliatory statements from Yanukovych, and the extension of tangible integration benefits (the previously described visa and protocol agreements) by Commission President Manuel Barroso.<sup>85</sup> Both parties recommitted to the negotiation of the DCFTA, which proceeded without any major incident until the November 2013 Vilnius Summit. Although Yanukovych ultimately declined to adopt the DCFTA in 2013, this summit illustrated the newfound willingness of the European Union to pursue closer cooperation with Ukraine. Previously, significant diplomacy by top leaders of the EU had been limited to support for the democracy movement of the Orange Revolution, while the cooperation projects were left to the bureaucratic level within the ENP and EaP frameworks. As the remainder of this chapter shows, Ukraine has continued to capture increasing attention at high levels of government within the European Union.

Despite the higher level of attention afforded Ukraine, the European Union’s dialogue has continued to stress complementarity, not competition, with Russia. Although the West had longstanding, Ukraine-specific, institutional links with Kiev through NATO, EaP became the preferred forum for diplomatic engagement due to its focus on economic and civilian political issues, avoiding the potential tension that could have been sparked through deepening NATO ties or a NATO Membership Action Plan.<sup>86</sup> During the negotiation of the DCFTA, Russia attempted to lure Ukraine away from closer cooperation with the European Union and join the Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan Customs

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<sup>83</sup>Simon Costea, “EU-Ukraine Relations,” 264–265.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>86</sup>Shapovalvova, “Political Implications,” 74.

Union (BRK-CU), an agreement that operates within the Russian Single Economic Space and that is legally incompatible with the DCFTA that was concluded between the EU and Ukraine in June 2014.<sup>87</sup>

Despite this overt competition with Russia over trade with Ukraine, the European Union remained conciliatory. In response to Moscow's proposal, in September 2013 "European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle attempted to de-escalate the situation, declaring that this issue 'is not a choice between Moscow and Brussels' . . . Mr. Füle also promised that the European Commission is 'working on overcoming the issues of legal compatibility between the AA and CU' in order to 'prevent new walls in Europe.'"<sup>88</sup>

This amicable effort by the European Union to advance cooperation with Ukraine while avoiding outright competition with Russia met with failure. Moscow threatened Ukraine with the loss of existing bilateral economic advantages while offering a \$15 billion loan. This resulted in the November 2013 rejection of the EU Association Agreement by President Yanukovich at the Vilnius Summit.<sup>89</sup> The EU reacted vigorously, dispatching mediators to Kiev to negotiate arrangements for new elections that might result in the replacement of Yanukovich.<sup>90</sup> Faced with growing political opposition from his own supporters and mass protests in the Euromaidan and elsewhere in Ukraine, Yanukovich fled to Russia in February 2014.<sup>91</sup> The resulting crisis transformed European Union diplomacy into outright competition with Russia and introduced a new antagonistic dimension to the situation.

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<sup>87</sup>Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit," 22.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 25; AA refers to the Association Agreement and CU to the Customs Union.

<sup>89</sup>Ioana Reiber, "Geopolitical Games Between Russia and EU: Ukraine and Moldova," *The International Annual Scientific Session Strategies XXI* (2014), 338.

<sup>90</sup>Neil MacFarlane and Anand Menon, "The EU and Ukraine," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 56 no. 3 (2014): 99.

<sup>91</sup>The Euromaidan, or Euro Square, was the site of violent repression of pro-European protests in Kiev on 30 November 2013, and it has become a symbol of an orientation toward Europe for pro-Western Ukrainians.

## **E. 2013 UKRAINE CRISIS AND CIVIL WAR**

The crisis that erupted over Ukraine marked a major shift in relations between the European Union and Russia. There is of course no single instant when the crisis began, but for the purposes of precision this study will consider President Yanukovich's decision not to conclude the EU Association Agreement in November 2013 as the initiation of the current Ukrainian crisis. The course of events since November 2013 has radically altered the nature of the competition over Ukraine. The European Union has openly condemned Russian behavior toward Ukraine as illegal and unacceptable. The EU began directly punishing Russia with a series of economic sanctions beginning on 17 March 2014.<sup>92</sup>

Russia has employed military force, including soldiers and weapons, inside Ukrainian borders. The eruption of civil war between the Ukrainian government and pro-Russian rebels in April 2014 has also drastically altered the nature of Ukrainian relations with foreign powers, including EU member states. These factors have galvanized the European Union into outright competition for Ukraine's future, firmly aligning the EU against Russian intervention in the Ukrainian civil war.

The evolution of the European Union's diplomacy in the Ukraine crisis since November 2013 bears remarkable similarity to its development during the 2004 Orange Revolution—also a major turning point in EU-Ukrainian relations. Following Yanukovich's rejection of the Association Agreement and DCFTA at Vilnius, European Union attitudes toward the Ukrainian government cooled as Yanukovich appeared to regress on respect for democratic standards, repressing pro-Western protestors and becoming increasingly authoritarian.<sup>93</sup> The situation was reminiscent of early 2004, when the failure of the Common Strategy and concerns over Kuchma's government chilled relations between the EU and Ukraine. Again a pro-Western popular movement, this one protesting the sudden abandonment of the AA/DCFTA, was targeted for political

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<sup>92</sup>European Union "EU Sanctions against Russia over Ukraine Crisis," European Union Newsroom, last accessed 5 September, 2014, [http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu\\_sanctions/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu_sanctions/index_en.htm).

<sup>93</sup>Reiber, "Geopolitical Games," 338–339.



repression. Again, just as the Orange Revolution prompted a European Union recommitment toward Ukraine, Yanukovych's ouster and subsequent Russian behavior drew the European Union into deepening relations to new levels.

The European Council swiftly unified to denounce Russian behavior, stating that "it strongly condemns the illegal annexation of Crimea" and declaring that "The European Union remains committed to uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine."<sup>94</sup> As with the internal divisions over how to respond to the Orange Revolution, however, the EU's shift toward overt competition with Russia since November 2013 did not occur without debate.

The discourse was again divided mainly along East-West lines. Poland and the Baltic states came out strongly in favor of overt competition with Russia. As early as March 2014, Estonian NATO Ambassador Lauri Lepik and Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski were calling for the permanent deployment of up to ten thousand NATO troops in their countries.<sup>95</sup> France and Germany were initially more reluctant than Estonia and Poland to directly antagonize Russia, despite their dismay over the annexation of Crimea. France at first refused to consider termination of a planned sale of two amphibious assault warships to Russia. Germany as well sought to avoid damaging relations with Russia. Angela Merkel rejected calls for NATO to garrison Poland or the Baltics, arguing it would "flout the NATO-Russia accord for 1997"—a reference to the NATO-Russia Founding Act.<sup>96</sup> Germany was initially reluctant to support broad sanctions against Russia. In May 2014 Merkel said of sanctions: "This is not necessarily

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<sup>94</sup>European Council, "Conclusions on Ukraine," European Union, March 20, 2014, [http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141707.pdf](http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141707.pdf), 2.

<sup>95</sup>Michael R. Gordon, "NATO to Firm Up Its Presence in Eastern Europe as it halts Cooperation With Russia," *The New York Times*, April 1, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/world/europe/nato-orders-end-to-practical-and-military-cooperation-with-russia.html?emc=edit\\_th\\_20140402&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=58749493&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/02/world/europe/nato-orders-end-to-practical-and-military-cooperation-with-russia.html?emc=edit_th_20140402&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=58749493&_r=2).

<sup>96</sup>Alison Smale, "German Leader Emerges as Key Figure in Ukraine Talks," *The New York Times*, August 19, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/20/world/europe/german-leader-emerges-as-key-figure-in-ukraine-talks.html>.

what we want, but we are ready and prepared to go to such a step . . . My main aim would be, first and foremost, improve stabilization and see that the elections can happen.”<sup>97</sup>

Continued escalation of the crisis, including the July 2014 destruction of civilian airliner MH17 and reports by NATO of confirmed Russian Army units fighting in eastern Ukraine, drove the member states of the European Union toward unified opposition to Russian activities. France took the major step of suspending its planned warship sale to Russia in September 2014.<sup>98</sup> Germany has adopted a tough line against Russia, becoming a leading sponsor of broad EU sanctions. In September 2014 Merkel pushed for deep financial, capital, defense, and travel sanctions despite a tentative ceasefire agreed upon by Russia, Ukraine, and Ukrainian separatists on 5 September 2014.<sup>99</sup> The European Council condemned “aggression by Russian armed forces on Ukrainian soil,” and said that it “calls upon the Russian federation to immediately withdraw all its military assets and forces from Ukraine.”<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the Council expressed its support for the Ukrainian government, backing Ukrainian President Poroshenko’s peace plan and calling for trilateral negotiations between Brussels, Moscow, and Kiev over implementing the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine.<sup>101</sup> It is evident from these trends that as a result of the crisis since November 2013, the European Union has reached a consensus on overtly opposing Russian intervention in Ukraine.

The actions and proclamations of the European Union resulting from the new consensus reflect a deepened commitment to compete for influence in Ukraine. The European Union and Ukraine signed the Association Agreement and DCFTA in Brussels on June 27th 2014. Aside from the extension of EU influence represented by this

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<sup>97</sup>Ben Wolfgang, “Obama, Merkel Sound Firm But Reluctant Note on Russian Sanctions,” *The Washington Times*, May 2, 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/2/obama-merkel-threaten-new-sanctions-against-russia/>.

<sup>98</sup>“Ukraine Crisis: France halts Warship Delivery to Russia,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29052599>.

<sup>99</sup>“Germany’s Merkel Pushes for Implementation of Russia Sanctions,” *Deutsche Welle*, September 10, 2014, <http://dw.de/p/1D9ri>.

<sup>100</sup>European Council, “Special Meeting of the European Council,” European Union, August 30, 2014, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/144538.pdf), 3.

<sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

agreement described in the preceding section, signing the AA/DCFTA was a direct rejection of Russia. President Putin declared that the agreement “attempts to impose an artificial choice between Europe and Russia.”<sup>102</sup> The European Union’s willingness to pursue closer cooperation with Ukraine even in the face of Russian military intervention that had already seized Ukrainian territory is demonstrative of the high level of value that the EU has come to put on Ukraine.

The diplomatic language of key leaders in EU countries has also come to reflect the theme that the old strategy of conciliation with Russia has come to an end, and that a competitive environment is the new norm. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, co-sponsor of the EaP along with Poland’s Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, wrote that “the invasion, occupation, and annexation of Crimea was a clear violation of fundamental principles of European security and international law.”<sup>103</sup> Statements issued by NATO, which has 22 members that are also European Union member states, are illustrative of the perception of a major shift in the European order. NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow declared in September 2014 that “there has been a fundamental change to our relationship with Russia.”<sup>104</sup> Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated in June 2014 that “there will be no business as usual with Russia until Russia comes back into line with its international obligations,” referring to the annexation of Crimea.<sup>105</sup>

The institutional leadership of the European Union is also adapting to the new competitive approach. Donald Tusk, a Pole who developed a reputation as a hardliner on Russian relations during his service as Poland’s Prime Minister, was selected to assume the presidency of the European Council in August 2014. With Tusk at the helm of the

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<sup>102</sup>“Ukraine Takes One Step Closer to EU,” *Deutsche Welle*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/ukraine-takes-one-step-closer-to-eu/a-17737239>.

<sup>103</sup>Carl Bildt, “Putin’s Credibility Lies Amid the Wreckage of Flight MH17,” *Financial Times*, July 19, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/ea355436-0e61-11e4-a1ae-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3CySX1lmO>.

<sup>104</sup>Alexander Vershbow, “The Challenges Facing NATO: Remarks by NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, London,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, September 2, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_112388.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_112388.htm).

<sup>105</sup>“NATO Foreign Ministers Agree on Readiness Plan, Endorse Support Package for Ukraine,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 25, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_111259.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_111259.htm).

EU, the vocal concern over Russia expressed in Poland and the Baltic states has gained a prominent and influential outlet. Alongside Tusk, Italian Federica Mogherini was chosen to succeed Lady Catherine Ashton as the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs. Mogherini has been criticized as being too sympathetic toward Russia, but following her appointment she described the Ukraine crisis as “a time of complete darkness,” and told the EU Parliament that “we need to respond in the strongest possible way,” indicating that, officially at least, she will align with the EU consensus to oppose the Russian intervention in Ukraine.<sup>106</sup>

The European Union’s direct competition with Russia during the crisis has occurred mainly within the economic arena. Between March and September 2014, the EU enacted four rounds of sanctions against the Russian Federation and individual Russian citizens. As a coordinated collective including several of the largest economies of the world, the EU enjoys unique advantages in exerting economic pressure. As Russia’s biggest trading partner, it is able to deny Russia access to its most important market.<sup>107</sup> The European Union has also proven agile in adjusting to the cost of sanctions, including retaliation by Russia, to its own economy—supplying the EU with greater staying power in an economic struggle. The European Commission has coordinated economic relief measures to redirect affected goods within the EU, begun exploring alternate markets in third party nations, and in August 2014 made €155 million available as short term compensation to affected EU firms.<sup>108</sup>

Russia has not employed energy restrictions against the EU during the Ukraine crisis—owing in part to Russia’s determination to demonstrate that it is a reliable supplier—but there is evidence that the EU may be resilient in this realm as well. A 2014 study by the University of Cologne’s Institute of Energy Economics indicated that the EU could survive up to 6 months without Russian gas supplies before suffering significant

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<sup>106</sup>“EU Decision on New Sanctions for Russia by Friday: Italy’s Mogherini,” *Reuters*, September 2, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/02/us-eu-russia-sanctions-idUSKBN0GX0RH20140902>.

<sup>107</sup>European Commission Trade: Russia, European Union, last accessed September 8, 2014, [ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/Russia/](http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/Russia/).

<sup>108</sup>European Commission, “Questions & Answers on the Potential Impact of Russian Measures against EU Agricultural products and the EU Response so far,” European Union, September 3, 2014, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-14-517\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-517_en.htm).

shortages.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, in September 2014 Gazprom gas production was 7.4 percent below forecast due to the impact of the crisis despite the lack of energy-specific sanctions, indicating that a broad energy blockade could become unsustainable for Russia.<sup>110</sup> Russia did restrict gas exports to Ukraine in June 2014. The European Union, however, has also proven agile in mitigating this strategy. Slovakia has prepared a gas pipeline for “reverse flow” to Ukraine, able to supply gas from the EU; and Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Poland could also participate in this effort.<sup>111</sup>

At the time of this writing, the Ukraine crisis has yet to be resolved. Yet it appears clear already that the European Union’s involvement in Ukraine, bolstered by a commitment to compete with Russia, has entered a new phase. The European Union has demonstrated awareness that it is in a competition, and it has taken concrete steps to deepen its cooperation with Ukraine, and to directly impose negative consequences on Russia for its armed intervention and policy of coercion in Ukraine. If peace is reestablished and the provisions of the Association Agreement and DCFTA are implemented, there is likely to be a continuation of the trend of increasing European Union interest and influence in Ukraine.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

When Ukraine attained independence in 1991, the European Union regarded it as just another state on its eastern periphery. Official engagement programs, including the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and the European Neighborhood Program, reflected conditional diplomacy, placing the burden of the interaction on Ukraine while offering little in the way of tangible incentives. Indeed, the European Union did not regard its interactions with Ukraine during this period as steps in a competition for influence with Russia; and the EU was careful to avoid conveying the impression that the PCA or ENP would create new divisions within Europe.

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<sup>109</sup>Harald Hecking, Christopher John, and Florian Weiser, “An Embargo of Russian Gas and Security Supply in Europe,” *Institute of Energy Economics at the University of Cologne*, September 3, 2014, 9.

<sup>110</sup>Howard Amos, “Gazprom Sees Production Tumble as Ukraine Crisis Bites,” *The Moscow Times*, September 3, 2014, [http://www.themoscowtimes.com/art\\_n\\_ideas/article/gazprom-sees-production-tumble-as-ukraine-crisis-bites/506410.html](http://www.themoscowtimes.com/art_n_ideas/article/gazprom-sees-production-tumble-as-ukraine-crisis-bites/506410.html).

<sup>111</sup>Amos, “Gazprom.”

The 2004 enlargement of the European Union, and the pro-Western, democratic, Orange Revolution began to change the EU's policy of keeping Ukraine at arm's length. The liberal norms and democratic values of the EU drove it to express vocal support for the Orange Revolution. Internally, the EU's newly acceded Eastern European members, including Poland and the Baltic States, demanded that the EU's relations with Ukraine become more prominent due to their interests in the region. As a result, the European Union for the first time made a palpable effort to deepen its influence in Ukraine. The European Neighborhood Policy codified an Action Plan for EU-Ukrainian cooperation, and established concrete, if minor, economic and political gains to reward Ukraine for its association.

As the ENP reached the limits of its effectiveness, the EU's Eastern members again pushed for deeper ties, sponsoring the Eastern Partnership. The Eastern Partnership significantly sharpened the competition over Ukraine. The Association Agreement and DCFTA promise to create strong legal and economic ties between the EU and Ukraine, potentially causing a permanent economic and political shift away from Russia. Despite efforts by the European Commission to downplay these programs as a potential source of conflict between East and West, Russia has responded with aggressive efforts to retain its influence.

The sudden abandonment of Ukraine's aspirations for an Association Agreement by President Yanukovich in late 2013 developed into a crisis, bringing the competition between the EU and Russia into the open. As a result, there has been a major shift in EU policy. The EU has made public statements critical of Russian behavior in Ukraine. The EU has directly punished Russia with economic sanctions, and its leaders have acknowledged the emergence of a vastly different security environment, demanding a return to deterrence. The EU and Ukraine have tightened their relationship, signing the AA/DCFTA.

Despite the new European Union policy, the current crisis may demonstrate the limits of EU influence in Ukraine. Due to the continuing high level of economic interdependence between Ukraine and Russia, the EU was forced to postpone

implementation of the DCFTA due to fears of Russian economic retaliation.<sup>112</sup> Accession to membership in the European Union, a top Ukrainian strategic goal, seems to be further out of reach than ever before following the Russian military intervention. While Ukraine may not accede to the EU for decades, it is clear that both Ukraine and the European Union have committed to deeper cooperation, and demonstrate a high level of alignment in foreign policy. As of this writing the crisis is still ongoing, but the trend toward increasing EU engagement with Ukraine, and competition with Russia, is obvious.

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<sup>112</sup>Andrew Rettman, "EU and Ukraine Suspend Trade Pact," *EU Observer*, September 12, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/125601>.

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### III. THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND UKRAINE

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a Ukrainian state had existed only briefly (1918–1921) during Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution. For much of history, the concept of an independent Ukraine would have been alien to most Russians. Indeed, Ukraine and its territory are in many ways an inseparable part of Russia’s historical identity. Russia’s relationship with the territory of Ukraine dates back to 880 AD and the founding of Kievan Rus. Russian civilization itself stems from this proto-state, which was the cultural and political ancestor to the Russian Empire.<sup>113</sup> The cities of Kiev, Odessa, Sevastopol, and Kerch figure highly in Russian national memory, and were accorded the status of “Hero Cities” to honor the hundreds of thousands of Russian and other Soviet soldiers who died in them during the Second World War.<sup>114</sup> In his March 2014 address on the annexation of Crimea to Russia, President Vladimir Putin reminded his audience that

everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptised. His spiritual feat of adopting Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea.<sup>115</sup>

History and identity drive Russian emotional investment in Ukraine. These factors also align closely with Russian aspirations to compete for dominance in peripheral states. This chapter will demonstrate that since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian policy has consistently aimed at bringing Ukraine squarely within Moscow’s sphere of influence and opposing Ukrainian integration with the European Union. From Ukrainian independence in 1991 to the present, Russia has regarded competition for influence in the

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<sup>113</sup>Reiber, “Geopolitical Games,” 340.

<sup>114</sup> “‘Cities of Military Glory’ Honored for WW2 Efforts,” *RT*, last accessed 5 December, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/cities-of-military-glory-honoured-for-ww2-efforts/#hero>.

<sup>115</sup>Vladimir Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” The Kremlin, March 18, 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>.

country as a zero sum game in which any improvement of relations between Kiev and Brussels is regarded as a loss for Moscow.<sup>116</sup> Russia seeks to secure its interests in Ukraine via traditional and non-traditional tools of state power, rather than the strategy of norm sharing, conditionality, and economic integration favored by the European Union. This chapter will show that Russia seeks to establish exclusive influence over Ukraine via Russian-dominated institutions, application of pressure in the economic and energy sectors, and military power. The chapter will also examine how Russia sponsors and exploits ethnic tensions and a “Pan-Slavic” identity to gain a political advantage over Ukraine and stymie the European Union, an approach also applied in other “frozen conflicts,” including Georgia and Moldova.<sup>117</sup> As articulated in Chapter II, the European Union has not always understood that it was involved in a competition with Russia, or that it needed to compete with Russia over Ukraine, and it has at times deliberately avoided doing so. While the actual intensity of Russian competition with the EU has varied depending on the strength of Moscow’s economic and military condition, the Russian Federation’s strategy has been consistently aimed at establishing Russian dominance.

## **B. RUSSIA’S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE STRATEGY**

In contrast to the European Union’s strategy of institution-building, multilateralism, normative engagement, and “take it or leave it” conditionality, Russia prefers to follow traditional power politics and establish a solely Russian sphere of influence while taking measures to exclude the European Union.<sup>118</sup> The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and especially former Soviet states, are perceived by Moscow as rightfully within the Russian sphere.<sup>119</sup> Moscow has expressed resentment at efforts by the European Union to deepen engagement and integration with these states, interpreting such actions as deliberate attempts to undermine Russian influence, to the extent that some Russian officials are convinced that the “color revolutions” in Georgia

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<sup>116</sup>Adomeit, “Russia and its Near Neighbourhood,” 65.

<sup>117</sup>Blank and Kim, “Moscow Versus Brussels,” 78.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>119</sup>Adomeit, “Russia and its Near Neighbourhood,” 5–6.

and Ukraine were in fact orchestrated by the United States and western European governments.<sup>120</sup> Even in the absence of the perception of deliberate efforts by the European Union to encroach upon Russian interests, Moscow feels threatened by the EU because the multilateral principles and liberal norms it embodies are perceived as antithetical to Russian interests, and irreconcilable with Russia's desire to establish itself as the central state of a power bloc in eastern Europe.<sup>121</sup>

Russian efforts to establish and maintain a sphere of influence have persisted despite attempts by Western powers over the last two and a half decades to alter the adversarial dynamic of the Cold War. Both NATO and the European Union have attempted to bring Russia into a new international order based upon liberal norms. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO articulated a new role for the alliance that envisioned supporting democracy promotion, transparency, and collective security.<sup>122</sup> NATO's continued existence and enlargement were described as stabilizing factors that would benefit all European states, including Russia. Shortly after the Cold War ended, Russian President Yeltsin seemed to welcome a new European order, and raised the possibility of Russia seeking NATO membership in 1991 and 1993.<sup>123</sup> His Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev even stated that Russia considered NATO "one of the mechanisms of stability in Europe and in the world as a whole," further adding that "our desire is to cooperate with this mechanism."<sup>124</sup>

Russian behavior since 1991, however, has revealed that Russian expectations for a new European order were fundamentally different from those of the West. The Russian view is that NATO, if it continues to exist at all, should be a mere political forum, or be subordinated to the OSCE, or since 2008, to the terms of the proposed European Security Treaty sponsored by Moscow. As early as 1993 President Yeltsin declared that "Russia

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<sup>120</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 19.

<sup>121</sup>Blank and Kim, "Moscow Versus Brussels," 70–71.

<sup>122</sup>David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 21.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>124</sup>Hannes Adomeit, "Inside or Outside? Russia's Policies Toward NATO," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik German Institute for International and Security Affairs* (2007): 4.

was and continues to be a great world power,” and that Moscow would not “shy away from defending our own interests.”<sup>125</sup> NATO’s December 1996 proposal to establish confidence building measures and improved transparency via permanent military liaisons at various Allied and Russian military commands was rejected outright by Moscow.<sup>126</sup> The NATO-Russian Founding Act, perhaps the major institutional achievement of rapprochement between the Cold War adversaries, was described by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov as merely “damage limitation,” indicating that Russia never approached the agreement in a spirit of cooperation but was rather simply limiting damage to its interests.<sup>127</sup>

The European Union’s diplomatic outreach programs have been similarly spurned. Beyond formalizing engagement with states along the EU’s eastern frontier, the ENP also had a second dimension designed to assist Russia in transformation to a successful democratic state.<sup>128</sup> Russia, however, has been sharply critical of the ENP, preferring to conduct relations with the EU on a bilateral basis. Russia also opposed Ukraine’s inclusion in the ENP program on the basis that the former Soviet republic was not a legitimate target of EU influence.<sup>129</sup> Russia also rejected the successor EAP program as an attempt to expand Brussels’s power at Moscow’s expense. Following the EaP announcement, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov caustically asked, “what is the Eastern Partnership if not an attempt to extend the EU’s sphere of influence?”<sup>130</sup> That Russia assigns the highest level of importance to defeating the spread of Western norms, institutions, and influence has been evident in Moscow’s actions in Ukraine since Russian troops without insignia appeared in Crimea in February 2014. When the February 2014 ouster of Viktor Yanukovich presented Russia with a defeat of its diplomatic efforts to derail deepening Ukrainian cooperation with the EU, Moscow

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<sup>125</sup>Adomeit, “Inside or Outside?,” 5–6.

<sup>126</sup>Yost, *NATO Transformed*, 140–141.

<sup>127</sup>Rühle, “NATO Enlargement and Russia,” 5.

<sup>128</sup>Andrew Wilson, *Protecting the European Choice* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2014), 6.

<sup>129</sup>Linkevičius, “European Neighbourhood Policy,” 81–82.

<sup>130</sup>Adomeit, “Russia and its Near Neighbourhood,” 46.

swiftly turned to military force to exert its influence and turn Ukraine away from Brussels.<sup>131</sup>

Due to these developments, a sometimes veiled competition between the European Union and Russia has come into sharp focus. The influential German Chancellor Angela Merkel said of Russian behavior: ““Nothing justifies or excuses the annexation of Crimea by Russia . . . Nothing justifies the direct or indirect participation of Russia in the fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk . . . Russia is calling into question Europe’s peaceful order and it is trampling on international law.”<sup>132</sup> Shortly after assuming office in December 2014, President of the European Council Donald Tusk stated that “Russia is a strategic problem,” a noticeable change from the EU’s preferred and long-standing description of Russia as a strategic partner.<sup>133</sup> Competition between the EU and Russia is now obvious, and Ukraine has become a central focus of that conflict.

It is possible that Moscow possesses this attitude simply because of the long history of animosity and strategic competition between western European states and Russia. However, the Russian Federation has been consistent in its strategy of seeking to establish preponderant influence over its non-European neighbors. Russia has consistently sought to use the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to accomplish hegemonic aspirations along its central Asian border with Kazakhstan.<sup>134</sup> Since Vladimir Putin’s assumption of the Presidency Russia has also made an effort, albeit with little success, to establish Russian influence in East Asian states and thereby constrain the power of the United States.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Wilson, *Protecting the European Choice*, 6–7.

<sup>132</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, “NATO Commander Warns Russia Could Control Whole Black Sea,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, last accessed 28 December, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30214172>.

<sup>133</sup>Valentina Pop, “Junker Calls Putin’s Bluff on South Stream,” *EUObserver* 4 December, 2014, <http://www.euobserver.com/foreign/126792>.

<sup>134</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance,” 854.

<sup>135</sup>Paradorn Rangsimaporn, “Russia’s Search For Influence in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Survey* 49 no. 5 (2009): 788.

### C. RUSSIAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN UKRAINE

Apart from Russia itself, Ukraine is the most populous and economically dynamic successor state of the Soviet Union. Ukraine's economic circumstances, geographic positions, strategic importance to Russian security, and demographics help explain why Moscow has taken an enduring and consistent interest in securing influence in the country. Until 1991, Ukraine was part of a single economic market along with Russia within the Soviet Union. Russia and Ukraine have shared a major interest in mitigating the negative effects of the separation imposed by the dissolution of the USSR. A major purpose of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was to help overcome economic dislocations resulting from the new national borders.<sup>136</sup> The CIS, in turn, has motivated and enabled Russian elites to interfere in Ukrainian policy because economic developments in the CIS have major implications for Russia domestically.<sup>137</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, Ukraine has remained economically vital to Russia. In 2013, Ukraine was Russia's third largest source of imports, according to the World Trade Organization.<sup>138</sup> Russian-Ukrainian trade, moreover, is largely in industrial products and other advanced sectors of the economy, as opposed to Russia's imports from the European Union, which have a strong agrarian character.<sup>139</sup> The content of this trade means that it is a major strategic interest despite being much smaller in volume compared to the Russian trade with the European Union. Moscow has an abiding interest in obstructing deeper cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union because legal conflicts between free trade arrangements with the European Union and the Russian-sponsored customs union would threaten Russia's trade prospects and compromise Moscow's ability to influence Ukrainian economic policy through the structures of the CIS or the nascent Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 860.

<sup>137</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 25.

<sup>138</sup>World Trade Organization, "Trade Profiles 2013," World Trade Organization, last accessed 28 December, 2014, [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/booksp\\_e/trade\\_profiles13\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/trade_profiles13_e.pdf).

<sup>139</sup>Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit," 28.

<sup>140</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 862.

Russia has a vital interest in Ukraine as both an enabler and recipient of its power projection strategies. Ukraine plays a major role in Russia's ability to exert influence in Europe through control of energy supplies. 25 percent of the European Union's gas supplies come from Russia, and 80% of that supply is transferred through Ukrainian territory.<sup>141</sup> Russia has used control of energy supplies to influence decision making in the capitals of the European Union, the Balkans, and Ukraine itself.<sup>142</sup> Deeper cooperation between Ukraine and the European Union would bring Ukrainian energy infrastructure under a common EU energy policy, restricting Russia's ability to exert pressures on governments in the EU and the Balkans.<sup>143</sup>

Ukraine is also an important state in Moscow's strategy of seeking to use local populations of ethnic Russians to project political power. Russia has claimed a right and responsibility to ensure security for the 25 million ethnic Russians left outside Russian borders after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>144</sup>

Ukraine is a major consideration in Russian security strategies as well. The Crimean peninsula and city of Sevastopol represent a vital line of communication between Russia, Europe in the west, and Russia's Asian frontier in the east.<sup>145</sup> A major instrument of Russian military strength, the Black Sea Fleet, is based in Sevastopol. Russian access was assured through a lease with Ukraine, but there is evidence that Moscow was not convinced that this arrangement was a secure, long term option. The terms renewing Russia's right to continue to base the fleet in Sevastopol were arrived at in part through pressure exerted by Moscow exploiting Ukrainian energy dependence on Russia.<sup>146</sup> Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was undoubtedly motivated in part by the strategic importance of the fleet: President Vladimir Putin's address to the

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<sup>141</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighbourhood Policy," 82.

<sup>142</sup>Anna Aseeva, "Rethinking Europe's Gas Supplies After the 2009 Russia-Ukraine Crisis." *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8 no. 1 (2010): 135; Blank and Kim, "Brussels Versus Moscow," 64–65; Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 863–864.

<sup>143</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 867.

<sup>144</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 10.

<sup>145</sup>Reiber, "Geopolitical Games," 340.

<sup>146</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 447.

Duma justifying the annexation specifically mentioned the Black Sea Fleet and maritime security no less than three times.<sup>147</sup> Ukraine has a significant population of Russians and Russian speakers, especially in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Ethnic Russians within Ukraine are strongly supportive of building institutional ties with Russia.<sup>148</sup> Moscow is keen to take advantage of these sentiments in Ukraine and in other nations to solidify its influence and obstruct the European Union.

Ukraine's significance to Russian security also resides in its continued importance to the Russian military-industrial sector. As of 2014, Ukrainian factories supplied Russia with a variety of vital military products, including targeting computers for tanks, helicopter engines, naval supplies, and parts for SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles.<sup>149</sup> While the 2014 conflict has spurred Russian officials to reduce dependency on Ukrainian products, wholesale replacement is a multi-billion dollar effort that will require years of rebuilding infrastructure.<sup>150</sup>

Ukraine's geographic position ensures that it will always be a major security interest for Russia regardless of the future status of the Black Sea Fleet or military-industrial considerations. Maintaining Ukraine as a "buffer area" squarely within the Russian camp has long been considered vital to the protecting the integrity of the core Russian state. The Russian state was built by military conquest of culturally and historically disparate regions.<sup>151</sup> Both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union relied on a militarized society to maintain a multicultural and multiethnic polity.<sup>152</sup> Consequently, in periods of relative military weakness, such as that which has prevailed in Russia since the end of the Cold War (despite a sustained military modernization effort since 2008),

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<sup>147</sup>Putin, "Address by President."

<sup>148</sup>Shulman, "Competing Versus Complementary Identities," 9–10.

<sup>149</sup>Michael Birnbaum, "Ukraine Factories Equip Russian Military Despite Support for Rebels," *The Washington Post*, August 15, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-factories-equip-russian-military-despite-support-for-rebels/2014/08/15/9c32cde7-a57c-4d7b-856a-e74b8307ef9d\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/ukraine-factories-equip-russian-military-despite-support-for-rebels/2014/08/15/9c32cde7-a57c-4d7b-856a-e74b8307ef9d_story.html).

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917–91* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 4–5.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 6.



the Russian government experiences such a massive sense of vulnerability that it considers its sovereignty itself at risk.<sup>153</sup> In other words, the “loss” of Ukraine to the European Union is considered unacceptable by Moscow; it would set a precedent enabling further paring away of territory considered to be Russian and a possible loss of Russian sovereignty.

#### **D. RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

Ukraine has a low level of multilateral institutional relations with Russia. Unlike fellow post-Soviet states Belarus and Kazakhstan, Ukraine is not a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the BRK-CU (Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan Customs Union), or the Single Economic Space, and Ukraine is not expected to become a member of the pending Eurasian Economic Union. The Commonwealth of Independent States is the main institutional tie between Russia and Ukraine outside of purely bilateral arrangements. Ukraine’s attitude toward the CIS is rather lukewarm. Kiev is not an enthusiastic member, participating in CIS programs selectively, and has even taken the initiative of founding a regional organization of its own—the GUAM (Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova) framework—of which Russia is not a member.<sup>154</sup>

Despite the scarcity of institutional ties and Ukrainian resistance to taking policy cues from the CIS, Russia has remained steadily committed to using international institutions controlled by Moscow to compete for influence in Ukraine. Russia, especially since the ascension of Vladimir Putin to power, has sought to establish the CIS (and forthcoming EEU) as a parallel integration force in competition with the European Union.<sup>155</sup> Moscow’s Medium Term strategy, published in 1999, asserts that Russia is the natural leader of the CIS, and states that Moscow is “against the establishment of ‘special relations’ by the EU with individual CIS countries to the detriment of Russian interests,” implying that Russia regards CIS member states as within its legitimate sphere of

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<sup>153</sup>Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought*, 7.

<sup>154</sup>Odushkin, “Acceptance of Ukraine to the European Union,” 373.

<sup>155</sup>Blank and Kim, “Moscow Versus Brussels,” 69.

influence.<sup>156</sup> Russian use of international institutions as an extension of national will has even drawn criticism from allies Belarus and Kazakhstan; they complained in October 2013 that the Russian government had too much control over the BRK-CU.<sup>157</sup> Russia has sought to use institutions to obtain influence in Ukraine on several occasions. While Ukraine has avoided across the board participation in CIS programs and agencies, a high level of interdependence between Ukraine and Russia has allowed Russia to exercise power through the CIS when it chooses to.<sup>158</sup> Russia successfully pressured Ukraine into signing 30 out of 53 CIS agreements on collective security.<sup>159</sup> While Ukraine has a high level of alignment with European Union CFSP declarations, its security agreements through the CIS have precluded adoption of the EU's positions on Belarus or the Caucasus—high interest issues to Moscow.<sup>160</sup> For its part Ukraine must seek to align with Russian-sponsored institutions to help compensate for the loss of the Soviet Union's single market.<sup>161</sup> The Kuchma administration was enticed to move toward joining the Single Economic Space in 2003, before those plans were disrupted by the Orange Revolution.<sup>162</sup> The prospect of Ukrainian membership in the Single Economic Space was again raised by Russia to entice President Viktor Yanukovich toward pro-Russian policies in 2010.<sup>163</sup>

Despite Yanukovich's relative friendliness to Russian interests, his administration continued to resist a high level of Ukrainian participation in a Customs Union or the CSTO.<sup>164</sup> The politics of competition between Russian-dominated international institutions and the European Union, however, motivated aggressive Russian intervention in the country. Low levels of Ukrainian participation in the CIS

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<sup>156</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 12.

<sup>157</sup>Havlik, "Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit," 25.

<sup>158</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 858.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 853.

<sup>160</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 853.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, 860.

<sup>162</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighborhood Policy," 79.

<sup>163</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 273.

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, 264–265.

proved that it was a poor means for maintaining a sphere of influence, and Russia lost interest in the CIS as a tool by 2009.<sup>165</sup> Moscow, however, was unwilling to concede Ukraine to the EU. The stronger market and energy ties between the EU and Ukraine represented by the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) would limit Russia's ability to influence Ukrainian economic policy and preclude any possibility of Ukrainian participation in the Eurasian Economic Union.<sup>166</sup> Russia used the combination of economic threats and the loan of fifteen billion USD to Ukraine in 2013 to reject the AA/DCFTA and keep open the possibility of Ukraine eventually joining the EEU.<sup>167</sup> Even after Yanukovich's February 2014 ouster allowed Ukraine and the EU to approve the deal, Ukraine was forced to suspend implementation of the pact because Russia threatened to impose trade restrictions.<sup>168</sup>

The Eurasian Economic Union came into existence on January 1, 2015. No capital can be sure exactly what final form it will take, or to what extent Moscow will succeed in its ambition to establish it as a competitor to the EU. The Ukraine Crisis since November 2013 has made clear that Ukraine will not be a member of the EEU in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, Ukraine's experience with the CIS, Single Economic Space, and BRK-CU demonstrate Russia's commitment to use international institutions as a means to build influence in Kiev while simultaneously limiting penetration by the European Union.

## **E. RUSSIAN ENERGY POLITICS IN UKRAINE**

Russia's vast energy resources are both a source of economic strength and a tool for coercive diplomacy. Russia has demonstrated a consistent strategy to employ its huge share hold in European energy supplies to encourage many governments to support Moscow's interests and obstruct the expansion of the European Union's influence.

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<sup>165</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 39.

<sup>166</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 862; Linkevičius, "European Neighborhood Policy," 82.

<sup>167</sup>Reiber, "Geopolitical Games," 338; Andrey Gurkov, "Eurasian Union: Putin's Answer to the EU," *Deutsche Welle*, May 29, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/eurasian-union-putins-answer-to-the-eu/a-17669138>.

<sup>168</sup>Andrew Rettman, "EU and Ukraine Suspend Trade Pact," *EU Observer*, September 12, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/125601>.

Russian energy policies in Ukraine form part of a broader energy strategy that seeks to extend Moscow's power throughout the Balkans and the Caucasus region. Russian investment in energy transport infrastructure in the Balkans, and control of the energy source, have permitted Russia to manipulate energy prices for political gain—threatening price hikes to deter governments from antagonizing Moscow, or reducing energy rates to price out any attempt by the European Union to introduce its own energy initiatives.<sup>169</sup> Azerbaijan's 2013 initiative to construct a pipeline to funnel Caspian gas to Europe enables Russia to play the Balkans, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan against each other in energy transport negotiations, further strengthening Moscow's coercive power.<sup>170</sup>

Consistent with Russia's regional energy diplomacy, the history of Russian energy relations with Ukraine is indicative of a sustained campaign to entice Kiev to support Moscow's interests, or deter it from adopting pro-Western policies. Ukraine is heavily dependent upon Russia for energy; 35 percent of gas and 75% of oil used by Ukraine originates in Russia.<sup>171</sup> Shortly after Ukrainian independence, Russia attempted to trade cancellation of Ukrainian gas debts in exchange for a long term agreement on Russia's Black Sea Fleet and surrender of the nuclear weapons that Ukraine had inherited from the Soviet Union.<sup>172</sup> At the time, Ukrainian elites were more interested in security guarantees from Russia, where the Duma had revealed an unwillingness to accept the independence of Ukraine as a whole and Crimea in particular in 1993.<sup>173</sup> The nuclear weapons issue was settled by the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which Ukraine agreed to transfer all Soviet-made nuclear weapons to Russia and accede to the Nonproliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state in return for official security assurances from

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<sup>169</sup>Blank and Kim, "Moscow Versus Brussels," 73.

<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>171</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, "Constraining External Governance," 866.

<sup>172</sup>Simon Pirani, *Ukraine's Gas Sector* (Oxford: Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, 2007): 19, <http://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/NG21-UkrainesGasSector-SimonPirani-2007.pdf>.

<sup>173</sup>Steven Pifer, "The Trilateral Process: The United States, Ukraine, Russia, and Nuclear Weapons," *Foreign Policy at Brookings: Arms Control Series Paper* no. 6 (2011): 6.

London, Moscow, and Washington.<sup>174</sup> In this case energy politics were not the deciding factor in the negotiations, but Russian intent to use energy as a lever was clear.<sup>175</sup>

Following the Orange Revolution in 2004, a gas crisis erupted between Russia and Ukraine in early 2006. While the public reason given for the dispute was an inability to agree on prices, an ulterior motive on the part of Moscow was probably to pressure the pro-Western Yuschenko regime.<sup>176</sup> In the 2007 elections, a faction led by Russia friendly Viktor Yanukovich took control of the Ukrainian government after Russia reminded the Ukrainian electorate “that although they are free to choose the government of their will, it should not be forgotten that Russia has the leverage to influence Ukrainian politics and will be more tolerant towards a pro-Russian, rather than pro-Western government.”<sup>177</sup> A 2007 study indicated that Ukraine participated in CIS-sponsored security agreements “only under extreme energy supplies-related pressure by Russia.”<sup>178</sup> In 2010, Moscow employed a gas deal as a carrot to renew the lease to the Black Sea Fleet’s naval base in Sevastopol, successfully using the same strategy that had failed in 1993.<sup>179</sup> In the Ukraine crisis since November 2013, Russia has repeatedly threatened to cut off gas supplies to Ukraine during the winter season in an effort to gain negotiating leverage with Kiev.<sup>180</sup> While some energy issues, such as the 1999 dispute, appear to be chiefly contractual in nature, it is undeniable that Russia has taken advantage of Ukraine’s dependence on Russian energy to exert Moscow’s will.

Russian energy policies in Ukraine are of major interest to the European Union due to Ukraine’s importance as an energy transit corridor to the European Union, and

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<sup>174</sup>Pifer, “The Trilateral Process,” 27–28.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>Peter Finn, “Russia’s State-Controlled Gas Firm Announces Plan to Double Price for Georgia,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/02/AR2006110201520.html>.

<sup>177</sup>Proedrou, “Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” 447.

<sup>178</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance,” 863.

<sup>179</sup>Proedrou, “Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” 447.

<sup>180</sup>Deutsche Welle, “EU to Mediate in Gas Dispute Between Ukraine and Russia,” *Deutsche Welle*, October 21, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/eu-to-mediate-in-gas-dispute-between-ukraine-and-russia/a-18009518>.

Russia's use of energy to oppose the EU's influence in Ukraine itself. As of 2008, 80% of the energy supplies the EU purchased from Russia transited through Ukraine.<sup>181</sup> 25% of the EU's total energy supplies are sourced from Russia.<sup>182</sup> The European Union's need to ensure stable delivery of energy, and Russian desires to exclude EU influence from Ukraine, have created fierce competition. Significant cooperation between the EU and Ukraine in the energy domain began with a 2005 Memorandum of Understanding to explore standardization options in Ukrainian energy infrastructure to improve compatibility with the EU.<sup>183</sup> In 2009, the European Union and Ukraine attempted to initiate a joint project aimed at modernizing Ukrainian energy infrastructure without any Russian participation or influence.<sup>184</sup>

Energy-related cooperation with the EU represents a major threat to Russian ambitions in Ukraine because it would limit Russia's ability to exclusively influence Ukrainian economic policies.<sup>185</sup> Russian President Vladimir Putin quickly acted to prevent any EU penetration of Russia's energy monopoly in Ukraine. In Putin's words, "if Russia's interests are being ignored, then we will be forced to revise our relationship with our partners. We really do not want things to reach that level. But the main point, which I would like to emphasize, is that trying to solve the problem of increasing gas supplies, gas which is Russian, is meaningless. We want this signal to be heard."<sup>186</sup> As result, the EU initiative was scrapped.

Energy policies have played an important role in shaping the EU-Russian competition since November 2013. Dependence on Russian energy resources by some EU members has served Russian interests by promoting debate within the European Union founded on the fears of some members that Russia could restrict their energy

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<sup>181</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighborhood Policy," 82.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>184</sup>Sergey Tumanov, Alexander Gasparishvili and Ekaterina Romanova, "Russia-EU Relations, or How the Russians Really View the EU," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 27 no. 1 (2011): 126.

<sup>185</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighborhood Policy," 82.

<sup>186</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 51.

supplies in retaliation for any strong EU censure of Russia. Germany, one of the most influential EU states, is particularly dependent on Russian energy supplies and initially was wary of mounting strong sanctions on Russia in the early phases of the Ukraine crisis due to concerns over its energy supply.<sup>187</sup> Then-Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk provoked strong opposition from German Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy Sigmar Gabriel when he proposed an EU energy syndicate to jointly negotiate energy purchases with Russia.<sup>188</sup> Germany prefers to avoid antagonizing Russia on energy policy and therefore supports keeping energy purchases within the private sector.

Russia's gas embargo on Ukraine, beginning in June 2014, has nevertheless drawn the European Union into direct confrontation with Russia over energy issues. Several European Union states have attempted to support Kiev's resistance to Russian pressure by supplying Ukraine with gas through a technique called "reverse flow." This tactic involves European Union member states purchasing gas from Russia, then delivering it to Ukraine through pipelines normally used to transport energy from Russia to Europe. In September 2014 Russia forced its EU clients to cease supporting Ukraine through reverse flow operations by threatening to cut off gas supplies to Europe entirely.<sup>189</sup> Russia's use of energy to pressure both Ukraine and its potential European Union supporters in the crisis since November 2013 is a clear continuation of a long term Russian strategy to employ energy coercion to keep Ukraine within Moscow's sphere of influence and exclude penetration by the European Union.

## **F. RUSSIAN MILITARY POWER AND UKRAINE**

Post-Soviet Russia has a track record of using military power to achieve its objectives in neighboring states. A theme of coercion using military means can be parsed out, especially once the Russian military began to recover from the post-Soviet decline in

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<sup>187</sup>James Kanter and Alan Cowell, "Ukraine Crisis is Testing E.U.'s Resolve," *The New York Times*, July 24, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/25/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-is-testing-eus-resolve.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C{%22%22%3A%22RI%3A18%22}&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/25/world/europe/ukraine-crisis-is-testing-eus-resolve.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Ar%2C{%22%22%3A%22RI%3A18%22}&_r=0).

<sup>188</sup>Frank Dohmen and Christoph Pauly, "Russian Riddle: EU Can't Agree on a Natural Gas Strategy," *Der Spiegel*, June 24, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/european-leaders-cannot-agree-on-contingency-plan-for-natural-gas-a-976929.html>.

<sup>189</sup>Andrew Rettman, "Russia Threatens EU States With Gas Cut-offs," *EU Observer*, September 26, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/foreign/125776>.

the late 2000s. Moscow's favored tactics are nuclear threats, intimidation with conventional forces, and actual use of military force—which has taken the form of both standard and hybrid warfare.

Russia's nuclear arsenal is the one aspect of Russian military power that has remained threatening throughout the two and a half decades since the end of the Cold War in 1989–1991. Russia has demonstrated a willingness to employ veiled and explicit nuclear threats to achieve its ends in Eastern Europe and Ukraine. In 2008, ahead of NATO's Bucharest Summit, Putin made clear that Russia considered Ukrainian membership in NATO unacceptable and outright threatened to target Ukraine with nuclear weapons if it joined the alliance.<sup>190</sup> Moscow has consistently employed similar tactics around the region. In 2013, Leonid Reshetnikov—the head of a major strategic think tank reportedly responsible directly to Putin—implied that Russia would have to target both Serbia and Montenegro with nuclear weapons if those nations pursued membership in the European Union.<sup>191</sup> In both 2009 and 2013 the Russian military openly conducted a large scale nuclear exercise simulating a nuclear attack on Warsaw.<sup>192</sup> The potential for Russia to actually use nuclear weapons in offensive combat is difficult to assess, but Moscow is clearly willing to use its nuclear arsenal for strategic posturing and signaling aimed to promote Russian interests.

Nuclear threats are not Russia's only means of military influence. Russia has also established a trend in the use of conventional military power to intimidate or directly intervene in other countries to secure advantages for Moscow. Russia appeared in danger of suffering a major setback in the competition over Ukraine in 2008 when the chief leaders of the Orange Revolution factions, Viktor Yushchenko (then Ukraine's President) and Yulia Tymoshenko (then Prime Minister), sent a joint letter to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer requesting a NATO Membership Action Plan for Ukraine

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<sup>190</sup>Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood," 29.

<sup>191</sup>Blank and Kim, "Moscow Versus Brussels," 67, 79.

<sup>192</sup>Anne Applebaum, "War in Europe is Not a Hysterical Idea," *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2014, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/anne-applebaum-war-in-europe-is-not-a-hysterical-idea/2014/08/29/815f29d4-2f93-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/anne-applebaum-war-in-europe-is-not-a-hysterical-idea/2014/08/29/815f29d4-2f93-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html).



at the upcoming April 2008 NATO Bucharest Summit.<sup>193</sup> In response, Putin publicly announced at the NATO-Russia Council that such a move would be regarded as a “direct threat” to Russia, and reportedly privately told U.S. President George W. Bush that “Ukraine is not a real state,” and threatened war to seize Crimea and eastern Ukraine if NATO moved ahead with a membership plan.<sup>194</sup> Under President Viktor Yanukovych Ukraine’s government lost interest in NATO membership and enshrined nonalignment by law in 2010, so Putin’s strategy was evidently successful.<sup>195</sup>

The credibility of Russian military threats—and consistency in strategy—were demonstrated without question later in 2008 during the Georgia-Russia war. The Saakashvili government in Tbilisi was far more vocal in defiance of Moscow than Ukraine had been up to that point, prompting Russia to firmly assert its dominance with a military campaign. Within a year of the Georgia-Russia conflict, relations with NATO and the EU returned to “business as usual,” indicating to Russia that military action was a viable strategy for preventing states from building closer ties with Western organizations.<sup>196</sup>

Russian experiences with the Ukrainian Orange Revolution, the Georgian Rose Revolution, and the 2014 ouster of Yanukovych have prompted an effort to envision a military doctrine to counter “color revolutions.”<sup>197</sup> In 2014 Putin ordered that Russia’s 2010 Military Doctrine be revised to include strategies to counter political movements in neighboring states deemed threatening to Russian interests, and established a Defense Management Center specifically devoted to managing future political situations.<sup>198</sup> These developments indicate that Russia envisions a major role for the military in any future competition over states on its periphery.

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<sup>193</sup>Linkevičius, “European Neighborhood Policy,” 80.

<sup>194</sup>Adomeit, “Russia and its Near Neighborhood,” 31–32.

<sup>195</sup>Costea, “EU-Ukraine Relations,” 264–265.

<sup>196</sup>Adomeit “Russia and its Near Neighbourhood,” 33.

<sup>197</sup>Roger McDermot, “Protecting the Motherland: Russia’s Counter-Color Revolution Military Doctrine,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 11 no. 206 (2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=43094&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=27&cHash=fda74f2e1761f53f09dcbb6947f7e731#.Vli2ocnUdqX](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43094&tx_ttnews[backPid]=27&cHash=fda74f2e1761f53f09dcbb6947f7e731#.Vli2ocnUdqX).

<sup>198</sup>*Ibid.*

What facts are known concerning Russia's interventions in Crimea and eastern Ukraine since early 2014 provide further evidence of Moscow's willingness to use force to secure its interests and hamper Ukrainian cooperation with the European Union. The February 2014 ouster of President Yanukovich by pro-Western factions presented Moscow with the failure of its efforts to prevent closer cooperation between the EU and Ukraine and the prospect that Ukraine would move irreversibly out of reach of the Eurasian Economic Union. Moscow's options to pursue its interests through Ukraine's political system were exhausted. Just as when faced with a defiant Georgian government that refused to bow to pressure, Moscow swiftly opted to exercise the military option.

Four days after Yanukovich fled Kiev Russia conducted a surprise military exercise near the Ukrainian border involving over 150,000 personnel, 90 aircraft and 880 tanks.<sup>199</sup> This exercise drew worldwide attention and concern but was evidently not designed only to intimidate, but rather was a "Maskirovka," or deception, disguising the activities of unmarked forces—Russian troops operating without insignia—in Crimea. In seizing and then annexing Crimea, Russia secured the Black Sea Fleet headquarters and reclaimed a territory than many Russian politicians felt naturally belonged to Russia in the first place. Pursuing these interests, however, created difficulties in achieving the strategic objective of a pliant Ukraine within a Russian sphere of influence. The seizure of Crimea eliminated any residual willingness of the new Ukrainian government to attempt to balance its position between Russia and the European Union. The new government under President Petro Poroshenko signed the Association Agreement with the EU in June 2014.<sup>200</sup> Poroshenko also reversed Ukraine's policy of military non-alignment, indicating a renewed desire for NATO membership by announcing plans to hold a referendum on joining the alliance.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup>Lukas I. Alpert and Jay Soloman, "Russia Orders Military Drill, Stoking Tensions," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304709904579406310892324006>.

<sup>200</sup>Roman Goncharenko, "Ukraine Takes One Step Closer to EU," *Deutsche Welle*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/ukraine-takes-one-step-closer-to-eu/a-17737239>.

<sup>201</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, "Ukraine to Hold NATO Vote When Membership Criteria Are Met," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, November 24, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30176256>.

Despite being faced with a committed adversary in Poroshenko's government, Russia has continued to use military power with the aim of destabilizing the Ukrainian political system. According to evidence published by NATO, Russia is supporting separatist forces in eastern Ukraine by supply convoys and the provision of heavy weapons, including tanks, artillery, and air defense units.<sup>202</sup> Igor Strelkov, one-time leader of the Luhansk People's Republic and self-claimed instigator of the civil war underway since 2014, is a Russian citizen and appears to have some connection to Moscow.<sup>203</sup> As Ukrainian government forces made progress in reclaiming territory from separatists, Russia escalated its military support, again directly intervening. In late August 2014, the Russian army crossed the border and routed a Ukrainian offensive.<sup>204</sup> The advantage Russia seeks with its continued military intervention in Ukraine is twofold. Putin has demanded a federalization of Ukraine with autonomous powers devolved to eastern Ukraine, a situation which would allow Russia to position itself as the protector of the Donbas region and influence decisions in Kiev through proxies in the nominal Donbas regional government.<sup>205</sup> The existence of an autonomous, pro-Russian region within Ukraine would also likely make any closer ties with the EU or NATO impossible as the Donbas region of Ukraine would presumably oppose the spread of Western influence.

Russia has also taken military action to shape the broader competition with the European Union in conjunction with the Ukraine crisis. Putin reportedly boasted to Ukraine's President, Petro Poroshenko, that, "If I wanted, in two days I could have

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<sup>202</sup>NATO, "NATO Releases Satellite Imagery Showing Russian Combat Troops Inside Ukraine," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, August 28, 2014, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_112193.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_112193.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>203</sup>British Broadcasting Corporation, "Ukraine Crisis: Key Players in Eastern Unrest," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, August 28, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-27211501>; Strelkov claimed to have served as a colonel in the FSB. Following the shoot-down of civilian airliner MH17 Strelkov left Ukraine and re-emerged in Moscow, prompting speculation that he had been recalled.

<sup>204</sup>Pavel Felgenhauer, "Ukrainian Donbas Becomes a Russian Protectorate," *Eurasian Daily Monitor* 11 no. 208 (2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=russia%20ukraine%20ethnic&tx\\_ttnews\[pointer\]=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=43108&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=b56e3746db7ba3be57374d04eb73a8bd#.VikS28nUdqV](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=russia%20ukraine%20ethnic&tx_ttnews[pointer]=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43108&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=b56e3746db7ba3be57374d04eb73a8bd#.VikS28nUdqV).

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

Russian troops not only in Kiev, but also in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw, and Bucharest,” an obvious threat to the European Union but also a message to other states considering membership that the EU could not even protect itself, let alone their countries.<sup>206</sup> As tension in Europe has escalated during the Ukraine crisis, Russia has stepped up military activity along its border with the EU member states in the Baltic and dramatically increased patrols by military aircraft in the Baltic Sea. Russian military intimidation has contributed to a rift in the EU (and NATO), with eastern members such as Latvia demanding a strong permanent military presence to defend their countries, juxtaposed with a reluctance to undertake such major steps by countries further afield such as Germany. Russia seems committed to its strategy of intimidation. In his annual address to the Duma in December 2014, Putin reportedly argued that “European nations ‘have forgotten national pride and sovereignty,’ while declaring that Russia is different, strong, its armed forces formidable, its freedom and sovereignty sacrosanct.”<sup>207</sup>

## **G. EXPLOITATION OF CULTURE AND ETHNICITY IN UKRAINE**

The cultural and ethnic angle of Russian relations with Ukraine follows a trend in broader Russian diplomatic strategy. In 1995 President Yeltsin asserted that the territories encompassed by the CIS were a “fundamental and vital interest” for Russia due to the 30 million Russians, Russian speakers, and people culturally linked to Russia who live in those areas.<sup>208</sup> Then deputy Mayor of St. Petersburg, Vladimir Putin expressed similar sentiments at a 1994 conference, claiming that Russia could not abandon the interests of Russians abroad in places “which historically have always belonged to Russia.”<sup>209</sup> Moscow has extended this strategy to areas that are neither historically Russian nor

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<sup>206</sup>Andrew Rettman, “Could Putin’s Troops ‘Be in Warsaw in Two Days’?,” *EU Observer*, September 30, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/defence/125807>.

<sup>207</sup>Pavel Felgenhauer, “Putin Calls for National Unity to Defeat US-Led Foes,” *Eurasian Daily Monitor* 11 no. 216 (December 4, 2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=43149&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=27&cHash=453c1e885acaefa3f49c809adb566902#.VInsjsnUdqV](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43149&tx_ttnews[backPid]=27&cHash=453c1e885acaefa3f49c809adb566902#.VInsjsnUdqV).

<sup>208</sup>Adomeit, “Russia and its Near Neighbourhood,” 10.

<sup>209</sup>Timothy Garton Ash, “Putin’s Deadly Doctrine: ‘Protecting’ Russians in Ukraine Has Fatal Consequences,” *The New York Times*, July 18, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/opinion/sunday/protecting-russians-in-ukraine-has-deadly-consequences.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/20/opinion/sunday/protecting-russians-in-ukraine-has-deadly-consequences.html?_r=2).

populated by Russians, but nonetheless share in a greater Slavic culture. Russia has exploited ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia to create fissures where its influence can be extended through Moscow's alternative institutional model.<sup>210</sup> Fueling ethnic conflict also contributes to Russia's competition with the EU by impeding the ability of Balkan states to meet EU accession criteria or respond to Western democracy promotion efforts.<sup>211</sup>

Ukraine is fertile ground for Russia to compete with the European Union on cultural and ethnic grounds. A 1995 study of ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine found that 44 percent were in favor of the Ukrainian state developing "strong international ties with Russia."<sup>212</sup> A further 32 percent believed that the Donbas region should not be part of the Ukrainian state, favoring rather an autonomous region or unification with Russia.<sup>213</sup> In Crimea, a preponderantly ethnic Russian region, a majority of residents identified themselves as "Soviet" rather than Ukrainian.<sup>214</sup> Chapter IV undertakes a more detailed investigation of cultural identity and its role in political loyalty in Ukraine. Within Ukraine support for Ukrainian independence, the European Union, or Russia cannot be broken down purely along ethnic lines. Taken together, however, these attitudes and figures are suggestive of a high level of receptivity to Russian competition for influence on ethnic and cultural grounds.

Russia has a steady trend of exploiting ethnic and cultural issues to extend its power in Ukraine. In 1995, the Russian Duma refused to ratify a friendship treaty with Ukraine negotiated by President Yeltsin, and was sharply critical of Yeltsin's acceptance of Crimea's status as Ukrainian territory. The treaty's rejection is indicative of a longstanding spurning of Ukrainian political independence, even at a time when the Russian state was not powerful enough to exert any significant coercion.<sup>215</sup> Russia

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<sup>210</sup>Blank and Kim, "Moscow Versus Brussels," 68.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., 81–82.

<sup>212</sup>Shulman, "Competing Versus Complementary Identities," 9.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Taras Kuzio, "Nationalism, Identity and Civil Society in Ukraine: Understanding the Orange Revolution," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* no. 43 (2010): 291.

<sup>215</sup>Arias-King, "Genesis of the European Union's Relations," 538–539.

backed Yanukovych's Party of Regions—the modern successor to the Ukrainian communist party—by supporting protests in Crimea against Ukrainian participation in NATO exercises.<sup>216</sup> Yanukovych's ouster in February 2014 was a major setback to Russia's ability to gain advantage through pro-Russian factions within Ukraine's political system, but also offered new motivation and opportunity to exploit ethnic and cultural issues.

The historical and cultural ties of Crimea to Russia have been used as the main argument justifying the detachment of the peninsula from Ukraine and its annexation to Russia. In his speech concerning the annexation, Putin argued that Russia “was not simply robbed, it was plundered,” when Crimea was transferred to Ukraine by Nikita Khrushchev in 1954 and then allowed to remain part of Ukraine in 1991.<sup>217</sup> Putin stressed that the total population of the Crimean Peninsula today is 2.2 million people, of whom almost 1.5 million are Russians, 350,000 are Ukrainians who predominantly consider Russian their native language,” and that a referendum on Crimea's future political status yielded 96 percent in favor of reunification with Russia.<sup>218</sup> Russian competition strategy in this case is twofold. Russia is creating a narrative that its actions in Crimea are merely the rectification of a historical and cultural crime. The emphasis placed on the referendum reflects an effort to compete with the European Union on its own principles and lay claim to additional legitimacy based on the precedent that Russia believes was established in the Kosovo case.

Russia's annexation of Crimea secured the Black Sea Fleet base and a large Russian population, but compromised Moscow's ability to exert control in the rest of Ukraine. The annexation removed a large sector of the pro-Russian electorate and provoked the formation of a political consensus opposed to Russian influence. The October 2014 parliamentary elections returned a solid majority committed to pro-European agendas and threatened to move Ukraine out of Moscow's sphere of influence

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<sup>216</sup>Proedrou, “Ukraine's Foreign Policy,” 449.

<sup>217</sup>Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation.”

<sup>218</sup>Ibid.

permanently.<sup>219</sup> In conjunction with the military action described in the previous section, Russia has sought to employ ethnic and cultural manipulation to detach areas of interest from Ukraine and bring them under Russia's influence. The areas targeted by Russia were referred to as "Novorossiia" by Putin on April 17th 2014, recalling the region's name during the Tsarist period and implying that the territories legitimately belong in the Russia sphere. Philosopher, political scientist, and advisor to the Duma Aleksandr Dugin claimed Novorossiia would be "a holy place for a renaissance of Russian culture, Russian spirit, and Russian identity."<sup>220</sup> Official efforts to legitimize Russian claims have been made: maps of the territory of Novorossiia have been published in Moscow, and the Russian Academy of Sciences plans to publish an official history of Novorossiia.<sup>221</sup> The strategic aim of the Novorossiia project is to establish an autonomous sub-region within a federalized Ukraine, dominated by a population that identifies politically, culturally, and ethnically with Russia.<sup>222</sup> In addition to military support, the separatists in eastern Ukraine have received administrative support from professional bureaucrats that have achieved success in building the institutions of the breakaway, Russia-backed Transnistria region of Moldova. Self-described professionals, these bureaucrats have reportedly imported a constitution written by Moscow lawyers and are constructing internal security agencies to consolidate the ability of the separatists to defend "a right to live on their land, to speak the language they want."<sup>223</sup> If this strategy succeeds, Russia will have essentially established a protectorate in the Donbas, securing Moscow's influence in the east. A federal Ukraine that includes a subunit with a strongly Russian character will also contribute to Moscow's ability to continue to compete with the

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<sup>219</sup>Vladimir Socor, "Kremlin's Policy Boomerangs With Ukraine's Parliamentary Election Results," *Eurasian Daily Monitor* 11 no. 195 (2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=novorossiia&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=43031&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=cb13c375c45a8242339a3fa968e11abb#.VIu3bHs2U6V](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=novorossiia&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=43031&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=cb13c375c45a8242339a3fa968e11abb#.VIu3bHs2U6V).

<sup>220</sup>Andrew E. Kramer, "Separatist Cadre Hopes for a Reprise in Ukraine," *The New York Times*, August 3, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/04/world/europe/separatist-pro-russian-leadership-in-eastern-ukraine-with-a-goal-of-establishing-government.html?ref=world&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/04/world/europe/separatist-pro-russian-leadership-in-eastern-ukraine-with-a-goal-of-establishing-government.html?ref=world&_r=0).

<sup>221</sup>Applebaum, "War in Europe."

<sup>222</sup>Felgenhauer, "Ukrainian Donbas Becomes a Russian Protectorate."

<sup>223</sup>Kramer, "Separatist Cadre Hopes for A Reprise."

European Union for Ukraine as a whole by enabling continued access to Kiev through Donbas proxies.<sup>224</sup>

## **H. CONCLUSION**

Russia's approach to competition over Ukraine is fundamentally different from that of the European Union. Russia demonstrated a consistent dedication to reassert exclusive, state-centric influence over Ukraine since Moscow lost political control of the country following the Soviet Union's collapse. The preference for a traditional, sovereignty-based strategy of dominance over the European Union's method of engagement, cooperation, and multilateralism stems from Russia's preferred version of the European order. Russia has resisted embracing Western multilateral norms and has refused to acknowledge that Ukraine and other states in the post-Soviet space are legitimate subjects of EU attempts to advance such norms. In its relations with the European Union and other Western institutions such as NATO Russia has worked to derail programs that would improve transparency, deepen cooperation, and legitimize Western multilateral power arrangements.

Russia's motivations to compete for Ukraine are manifold. Ukraine figures highly in the national memory of Russians and its battlefields are an indelible part of the Russian identity. Although no longer part of the Soviet single market, Ukraine remains a state with major economic importance to Russia. Before 2014, there was a significant trade relationship between the two countries, especially in sensitive military technology. Ukraine is a vital link in Russia's energy export infrastructure to Europe. The country is also important to Russian security strategy, both as a base to project power to Europe through the Black Sea Fleet and as a buffer to the expanded NATO alliance. Ukraine also hosts a large population of Russians and Russian speakers who look to Moscow for cultural and sometimes political leadership.

Russia has used traditional and novel strategies to achieve its objective of securing exclusive influence over Ukraine. While Russia has sponsored international institutions such as the CIS to seemingly present an alternative to the European Union,

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<sup>224</sup>Felgenhauer, "Ukrainian Donbas Becomes a Russian Protectorate."



these institutions are chiefly aimed at allowing Moscow to exert influence through avenues other than direct bilateral relations. While Ukraine's history of limited or nonexistent interaction with the CIS, the CSTO and the EEU show that this strategy has been less than successful for Russia, it is evident that Moscow's aim has been to secure Kiev's cooperation with Russian policies. Russia has consistently used energy as a tool to enforce its will, both by punishing Ukraine with higher prices or cutoffs and by enticing cooperation through special deals. When diplomatic and economic leverage has failed, Moscow has not hesitated to employ military force to advance its core interests. The Russian military was used in 2014 to seize Crimea, home of the Black Sea Fleet, and support a rebel insurgency in eastern Ukraine that has complicated the European Union's efforts to carry cooperation with Ukraine any further. In concert with military action, Russia has also stepped up rhetorical and political support for ethnic Russians within the country, asserting the right to protect Russians outside its borders and demanding autonomy for areas of Ukraine heavily populated by Russians.

In the wake of the seizure of Crimea, Russian strategy in Ukraine seems to have evolved. Rather than seek to influence the country as a whole, Russia appears to have settled for asserting firm control over the territories of greatest value to Moscow. Crimea was officially annexed to the Russian Federation. The Russian military has provided material support, and has at times engaged in combat, to prevent Kiev from defeating the pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. Russia's actions have strengthened pro-European Union elites in Kiev, removing—for the time being—the possibility of complete Russian hegemony. Yet Russia continues its competition with the EU by demanding the establishment of an autonomous region, through which it could stymie European Union-led cooperation efforts through pro-Russian proxies. The events of since late 2013 have yielded both gains and setbacks for Moscow, yet the Russian strategy of seeking exclusive influence over Ukraine has remained unchanged. The objective of Russian competition over Ukraine, and the value placed on winning that competition by Moscow, have remained consistent—in contrast to the European Union's slow growth of interest. Moscow will likely continue to seek ways to bolster Russian state power in Ukraine while derailing EU cooperation projects.

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## IV. ANALYZING THE COMPETITION IN UKRAINE

### A. INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have undertaken a detailed consideration of European Union and Russian foreign policies with regard to competing for influence in Ukraine, and those strategies aimed at undermining or placating each other. This chapter considers how the attitudes and policies of Ukraine itself have shaped the competition between the EU and Russia. Ukraine's relations with both these entities are complex and cannot be reduced to a friend or foe dichotomy. The complexity is driven by the diversity of approaches to identity within Ukraine itself, and by the realities of Ukraine's geopolitical position. In terms of culture, economics, and geography, Ukraine is a crossroads between Europe and Russia.<sup>225</sup>

A crossroads implies that a singular course must be chosen, yet such a decision is not easy for the Ukrainian state. Ukraine's historically close association with Russia, both culturally and via centuries of political union, has created a potent incentive to maintain a strong relationship despite independence. The economic opportunities offered by the European Union, as well as the Ukrainian nationalists' desire to develop a Ukrainian community distinct from Russia, create major internal pressures to engage with the powers of Europe.<sup>226</sup> Ukraine's relations with the European Union and the Russian Federation since independence reflect these diverging attractions. Kiev has sought a delicate balance—to maintain its longstanding ties with Russia while expanding relations with the European Union. The forces that support these initiatives are not strictly partisan in nature. Political leaders with a decidedly pro-European agenda, such as President Kuchma, have been careful to address Russian concerns. The staunchly Russia-friendly President Yanukovich demonstrated a sustained concern for Ukraine's European opportunities. The groups and factions that make up the diverse identities of the

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<sup>225</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, xiii.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*, 292–293.

Ukrainian citizenry similarly have demonstrated complex attitudes toward the two choices offered at the crossroads.

The competition between the European Union and Russia over Ukraine has been sustained by Kiev's efforts to placate both sides. As neither Brussels nor Moscow was able to gain decisive advantage, each has continued—and in the case of the European Union, significantly transformed—its efforts to become the major external influence in Ukrainian affairs. The competition thus intensified until Ukraine was forced into a decision over an association agreement with the EU in November 2013. As of this writing in April 2015, Ukraine appears to have rejected participating in Russia's Eurasian Economic Union project and to have committed to seeking closer ties with the European Union. This chapter will examine how domestic Ukrainian attitudes have shaped competition by the EU and Russia and, conversely, how the competition has shaped Ukraine's policies. A brief survey of identity in Ukraine will be undertaken to illuminate the diverse groups within the country and their viewpoints on the European Union and Russia. The chapter will then show that Ukrainian foreign policy since independence has enmeshed the EU and Russia into competition with each other by seeking to engage with both powers. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Ukraine's choice of the European Union in 2014.

## **B. UKRAINIAN IDENTITIES BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND RUSSIA**

Despite the short history of Ukrainian statehood, the idea of a Ukrainian identity separable and distinct—though culturally linked—with Russia is ancient. Ukraine claims Kievan Rus as its national origin just as Russia does. To Ukrainian nationalists, the Ukrainians are not an offshoot. In their view, the Ukrainian people are either the true inheritors of Rus' legacy, or at least share an equal historical and cultural claim with the Great Russians.<sup>227</sup> Ethnic Ukrainians have also developed historical ties to Europe independent of the Russian experience.

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<sup>227</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 19.

The western Ukrainian territory of Galicia has through the centuries been part of Austrian, Polish, and Czechoslovakian polities, creating an enduring connection to Europe.<sup>228</sup> Evidence suggest that ethnic Ukrainians in Galicia and as far east as Kiev consider themselves as part of Europe due to these long standing connections.<sup>229</sup> Western Ukrainian nationalists exhibit a high level of political organization, stemming from policies of autonomy practiced by localities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>230</sup> Nationalist Ukrainians strongly support ties with Europe as a means of assuring their independence from Russia and to assist in the development of a Ukrainian identity.<sup>231</sup> A 1997 survey of Ukrainian elites indicated 70% favored association with the European Union over Russia.<sup>232</sup>

The forces of nationalism, however, have not managed to exert a decisive influence on Ukrainian foreign relations. The early political organization representing Ukrainian nationalism, the Rukh, was a major driving force behind Ukraine's secession from the Soviet Union. Rukh, however, could not obtain more than a quarter of the seats in the Rada and was forced to strike a power-sharing "Grand Bargain" with Ukrainian communists who represented elements of the population opposed to nationalism and more strongly identified with a Russian cultural identity.<sup>233</sup> As this chapter shows, the influence of Ukrainian nationalists on their government's foreign policy has consistently been tempered by a need to maintain reasonably positive relations with Russia.

In the eastern and southern territories of Ukraine, the population expresses a high level of identification with Russia culturally and linguistically, but rarely a form of Russian nationalism antithetical to Ukrainian independence.<sup>234</sup> Those identifying strongly with Russia are not only ethnic Russians—of which a significant minority

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<sup>228</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 452.

<sup>229</sup>Odushkin, "Acceptance of Ukraine," 367.

<sup>230</sup>Kuzio, "Nationalism, Identity, and Civil Society," 285.

<sup>231</sup>Linkevičius, "European Neighbourhood Policy," 83–84.

<sup>232</sup>Odushkin, "Acceptance of Ukraine," 370.

<sup>233</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 160, 175.

<sup>234</sup>Linkevičius, "The European Union Neighbourhood Policy," 83–84.

exists—but also Russophone Ukrainians. Ethnic Russians in Ukraine prior to 2014 rarely manifested a tendency to favor separatism, and there is no evidence of ethnic conflict in Ukraine during its first decade of independence.<sup>235</sup> A 1995 survey of Russian elites in Donetsk revealed a perceived lack of conflict between loyalty to Ukraine and identification with Russian culture.<sup>236</sup> Ukrainian Russophones have a complex attitude toward foreign relations, exhibiting support for Ukraine’s political independence while also seeking to maintain cultural links with Russia.<sup>237</sup> Ethnic Russians and Ukrainian Russophones alike have demonstrated attachment to a “Soviet” rather than Ukrainian or Russian allegiance.<sup>238</sup> The segment of Ukraine’s population identifying itself as “Soviet” has never accepted Ukrainian or Russian nationalist rhetoric, preferring the perceived stability, prestige, and economic security that Ukraine enjoyed while it was a republic of the Soviet Union. Inherent in this identity is a belief that Ukraine and Russia should be a fundamentally connected unit.<sup>239</sup> While favoring strong ties with Russia, this identity is not outright hostile to Ukrainian ties with Europe. Boris Oliinyk, a leader of the Ukrainian Communist party that embodies the Soviet identity within the country, claimed in 1994 that “we were always part of Europe.”<sup>240</sup> Subsequently, Ukrainian Presidents from Kuchma to Poroshenko have maintained a formal engagement program with the European Union to facilitate closer cooperation.

A Ukrainian ideological “center” also exists between European-leaning nationalists and Slavic-oriented ethnic Russians and Ukrainian Russophones. This space is not filled by an organized political faction, but rather by corporate interests and oligarchical business elites. These interests have been successful in obtaining political power due to the inability of nationalists to generate majority support, and the disorganization of Russian-oriented factions.<sup>241</sup> The interests in the center are

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<sup>235</sup>Odushkin, “Acceptance of Ukraine,” 371.

<sup>236</sup>Shulman, “Competing Versus Complementary Identities,” 6.

<sup>237</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 211.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>239</sup>*Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>240</sup>*Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>241</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 173.

opportunistic in nature and approach the European Union and Russia accordingly. Ethnic Ukrainian business elites in the east are supportive of ties with Russia due to their industrial concerns.<sup>242</sup> A new class of Ukrainian capitalists has consistently supported a succession of political fronts in favor of trade relations with the West while remaining wary of nationalist rhetoric.<sup>243</sup> The unaligned and opportunistic nature of these interests is well represented by the Ukrainian Green party, founded by an environmentalist but actually controlled by bankers “that bought the other places on the party’s list.”<sup>244</sup> The transient nature of corporate political factions and their lack of strong affiliation with Ukraine’s right or left make the long term attitude of these factions toward Russia or the EU hard to pin down. Nonetheless, they are an ever present and influential part of the Ukrainian political scene.

### **C. UKRAINE AND THE EU-RUSSIA COMPETITION PRIOR TO THE ORANGE REVOLUTION**

Ukraine began its modern history as an independent state with a turn away from Russia, and a series of actions to seek closer ties with Europe. The 1990 Ukrainian Declaration of State Sovereignty included language declaring Ukraine part of Europe, stating that Ukraine “directly participates in the general European process and European structures.”<sup>245</sup> In a referendum on independence held December 1, 1991, all regions of Ukraine, including the east and Crimea, voted in favor. The high level of support for separation from Russia elicited surprise in many quarters, including Russian leader Boris Yeltsin, who remarked “What, even the Donbass voted yes?”—referring to the region now engaged in armed revolt against the Kiev government.<sup>246</sup> Since gaining independence, the Ukrainian government has pursued a consistent strategy of making

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<sup>242</sup>Proedrou, “Ukraine’s Foreign Policy,” 451.

<sup>243</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 185.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid., 187.

<sup>245</sup>Linkevičius, “European Union’s Neighbourhood Policy,” 76; The Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, *Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine* (Kiev, Ukraine: Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, July 1990), Article X.

<sup>246</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 169.

good on its claim to be a European state by building and expanding links to the European Union.

In the 1994 Ukrainian presidential elections, incumbent Leonid Kravchuk was defeated by Leonid Kuchma. Despite Kuchma's political affiliations—he won every oblast in the Russia-oriented east while Kravchuk swept the pro-European west—the Ukrainian government undertook its first major expansion of relations with the EU in the form of the 1994 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The Ukrainian impetus behind the agreement was to seek improved economic cooperation with the EU and an eventual free trade agreement.<sup>247</sup> Regardless of the cultural affinity felt for Russia by the Kuchma administration, a high value was placed on the ability to pursue economic growth independent of Russia that the EU represented. During this period the Kuchma administration also formed the GUAM organization as a means to establish an alternative economic bloc to the CIS within the post-Soviet space that would be more compatible for cooperation with the EU.<sup>248</sup> A Ukraine-EU common strategy was published in 1999, representing continued interest in expanding cooperation, but amounting to little tangible change.<sup>249</sup>

As described in Chapter II, the process of expanding Ukrainian-EU relations in this period was slow due to the lack of interest demonstrated by Brussels. Ukraine, however, also bears significant responsibility for the plodding pace of diplomacy due to its continued interest in maintaining positive relations with the Russian Federation. There is no evidence of a strong Ukrainian political constituency advocating vigorously expanding cooperation with the EU at Russia's expense as a primary interest. Diplomacy with the EU was conducted via presidential fiat, economically motivated, and pursued with Russia's sensibilities in mind.<sup>250</sup> Indeed, concurrently with efforts to establish

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<sup>247</sup>Sergey Tumanov, Alexander Gasparishvili and Ekaterina Romanova, "Russia-EU Relations, or How the Russians Really View the EU," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 27 no. 1 (2011): 121–122.

<sup>248</sup>Odushkin, "Acceptance of Ukraine," 373.

<sup>249</sup>Kubicek, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism," 337.

<sup>250</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 192–193.



improved cooperation with the EU, Kiev also sought to maintain constructive relations with Russia.

While Ukrainian independence had gathered majority support in both the east and the west, the country did not seek to abandon association with the new Russian Federation. In his 1994 presidential inauguration address, Kuchma affirmed that “Ukraine is historically part of the Eurasian economic and cultural space.”<sup>251</sup> Ukraine’s long standing status as a part of a single economic market within the Soviet Union, and even earlier, the Russian Empire, was a major driver for Kiev’s continued engagement with Moscow. Ukraine’s membership and participation in the Commonwealth of Independent States were primarily motivated by the need to mitigate the economic impact of the loss of the Soviet market.<sup>252</sup> In the energy sector Ukrainian corporate oligarchs are heavily vested in stable relations with Russia to maintain the extant energy infrastructure that their livelihood depends on.<sup>253</sup>

Aside from the economic requirements of close cooperation with Russia, a strong political constituency demanded continued engagement. From independence in 1991 until 2001, the Ukrainian Communist Party, which represented the majority of ethnic Russians and Ukrainian Russophones within Ukraine, was the largest organized political faction.<sup>254</sup> A central policy of the Communist platform was “the voluntary creation of an equal Union of fraternal peoples on the territory of the former USSR.”<sup>255</sup> This policy expressed strong support for deepening political ties with Russia. Ukrainian elites are at least partially responsible for the government’s slow pace in developing relations with the European Union due to their acute awareness of the need to maintain a strategic partnership with Russia.<sup>256</sup> Russia, while maintaining an ambition to exercise exclusive influence over Ukraine, had difficulty pursuing its aims due to the disruption and

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<sup>251</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 195.

<sup>252</sup>Dimitrova and Dragneva, “Constraining External Governance,” 860.

<sup>253</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 274–275.

<sup>254</sup>Odushkin, “Acceptance of Ukraine,” 369.

<sup>255</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 310.

<sup>256</sup>Shaplova, “Political Implications,” 77.

weakness experienced following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the new millennium, Ukraine's attempt to walk a tightrope between Brussels and Moscow escalated the competition as a resurgent Russia faced an increasingly engaged European Union.

#### **D. THE ORANGE REVOLUTION, ENP AND EAP**

The events of the Orange Revolution, and the subsequent escalation in the competition between the EU and Russia, are linked to Ukraine's continued policies of courting both powers. The domestic forces behind the Orange Revolution itself were formed in response to a machinated victory by Yanukovich in the 2004 presidential election. The scheme was supported by outgoing President Kuchma, who supported Yanukovich due to a perceived need to maintain a balanced relationship with Moscow.<sup>257</sup> The outrage at the corrupt electoral process strengthened the pro-EU forces within Ukraine and drew the European Union itself into deeper engagement. At the height of the Orange Revolution, 55% of surveyed Ukrainians expressed support for closer ties with the European Union.<sup>258</sup> In the previous decade, only a quarter of the population could be counted among the pro-West faction.<sup>259</sup> The European Union became directly involved in Ukrainian politics for the first time, dispatching negotiators to help mediate the agreement that eventually resulted in the election of pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko.<sup>260</sup> Under Yushchenko, Ukraine's involvement in the EU-Russia competition intensified. The new government's policies domestically downgraded the status of the Russian language and culture.<sup>261</sup> Internationally, Kiev stepped up participation in the EU's new European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Ukraine and the EU agreed on an ENP Action Plan (AP) despite the lack of any major incentive to do so for Kiev.<sup>262</sup> The Yushchenko administration aligned with the EU on the controversial

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<sup>257</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 449.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid., 453.

<sup>259</sup>Wilson, *The Ukrainians*, 160.

<sup>260</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 197.

<sup>261</sup>Kuzio, "Nationalism, Identity, and Civil Society," 291.

<sup>262</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 189.

Transnistria issue, opposing Russian interests.<sup>263</sup> Viktor Yanukovych, the leader of the Ukrainian pro-Russia faction, announced support for pursuing relations with the European Union as well. In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, his Party of Regions was officially in favor of pursuing closer economic cooperation with the EU, and argued that its obstruction to enacting the ENP AP was undertaken in order to obtain better terms for Ukraine.<sup>264</sup>

Demands for closer association with the European Union by multiple factions within Ukraine revealed that the ENP was an inadequate mechanism.<sup>265</sup> The creation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) by the EU was prompted in part by Ukraine's interest in a more robust framework, including specific incentives such as a visa protocol and a free trade agreement. Even after the election of Yanukovych to the Presidency in 2010, efforts to deepen cooperation with the EU continued. Upon assuming power Yanukovych announced that "'Ukraine's integration with the EU remains our strategic aim."<sup>266</sup> A November 2010 summit in Brussels between EU leaders and Yanukovych resulted in an agreement to establish an EU Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) for Ukraine.<sup>267</sup> Ukraine's continued expression of interest in the EU, even during the rule of an ostensibly pro-Russian administration, committed Brussels even further to competition for influence in the country. The ENP, EaP, and pledge to a DCFTA represented major investments by the EU. In combination with the moral and political investment made by vocal EU support for the Orange Revolution, these developments contributed to the EU's growing stake in Ukraine.

The dramatic events of the Orange Revolution would seem to indicate a decisive turn toward the European Union and away from Russia by Ukraine. While the reputation of the European Union did indeed enjoy increased popularity in Ukrainian society and

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<sup>263</sup>Proedrou, "Ukraine's Foreign Policy," 449.

<sup>264</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 198–199.

<sup>265</sup>Shaplova, "Political Implications," 71; Linkevičius, "European Union's Neighbourhood Policy," 77.

<sup>266</sup>"Ukraine's Political Cat-Fight Leaves Voters Cold," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, December 2, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8391317.stm>.

<sup>267</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 273.

ties between Kiev and Brussels began to deepen, Ukraine continued to carefully maintain open channels with Moscow. As the tide of emotional pro-Western sentiment that buoyed the Orange Revolution receded, political forces favoring Russia reemerged. During the Orange Revolution, the disintegration of the Communist Party had left ethnic Russians and other Russia-oriented Ukrainians politically disorganized.<sup>268</sup> In subsequent years, Victor Yanukovich's faction, the Party of Regions, emphasized a pro-Russian agenda and anti-NATO rhetoric to mobilize this fallow base of support.<sup>269</sup> The Party of Regions opposition to adopting the ENP Action Plan contributed to the elimination of a government office dedicated to overseeing the project after only a year of existence.<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, discussion within the Ukrainian Rada was reopened on membership in the Russian Common Economic Space, a Moscow-led alternative integration project.<sup>271</sup>

Following Yanukovich's election to the presidency in 2010, the Ukrainian government's foreign policy continued to entertain Moscow's efforts to compete for influence, alongside participating in the EU's EaP. In 2010 the Yanukovich administration reaffirmed Ukraine's interest in the Common Economic Space and in Ukrainian membership in the Belarus-Russia-Kazakhstan (BRK) Customs Union.<sup>272</sup> The pace of participation in the EaP slowed drastically and the Rada passed a law declaring Ukraine an officially nonaligned state.<sup>273</sup> Ukraine's continued flirtation with increased institutionalized economic cooperation with Russia helped keep its participation a central objective in Moscow's Eurasian Economic Union project. As discussed in previous chapters, the Association Agreement due to be signed between the EU and Ukraine in November 2013 deeply threatened Russia's longstanding diplomatic strategy toward Ukraine. Roy Allison described the consequent escalation of competition by Moscow: "As the domestic Ukrainian political crisis mounted in late 2013, Putin stepped up efforts to stake out not just an economic, political, or strategic division but a normative division,

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<sup>268</sup>Kuzio, "Nationalism, Identity, and Civil Society," 290.

<sup>269</sup>Kubicek, "Problems of Post-Post-Communism," 333.

<sup>270</sup>Wolczuk, "Implementation Without Coordination," 200–201.

<sup>271</sup>Ibid.

<sup>272</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 273.

<sup>273</sup>Costea, "EU-Ukraine Relations," 264–265.

requiring states to choose between EU-centered and Russia-centered integration.”<sup>274</sup> Yanukovych, perhaps sensing that embracing the EU agreement would badly damage Ukraine’s carefully maintained relations with Russia, abruptly abandoned the deal, accepting a large Russian loan and other perks, including an energy discount, in its stead.<sup>275</sup> This maneuver, however, proved a tipping point in the competition.

## **E. AN END TO THE BALANCING ACT**

Ukrainian engagement with both the EU and Russia since independence had ensured that each power had a sizeable stake in emerging as Kiev’s main partner. The intensification of competition between Moscow and Brussels sustained and deepened each power’s efforts to bring Ukraine into its economic system and international alignment. The legal incompatibility of the two systems and Russia’s perception of the competition as a zero sum game demanded that a choice be made. Yanukovych’s sudden cancellation of the laboriously negotiated EU association agreement proved to be the trigger that decisively ended Ukraine’s careful balancing and transformed Kiev’s foreign policy to an enthusiastic embrace of the EU and a rejection of Russia’s designs for Ukrainian membership in the EEU.

Yanukovych’s decision triggered immediate and robust political opposition from Ukrainian nationalists and pro-Europe factions of the political and managerial class. The rise of pro-Europe sentiment was so powerful that Yanukovych evidently saw no prospect of preserving his position and chose to flee the country in February 2014 rather than see through to conclusion the negotiations with the opposition factions. There was little doubt that the new Ukrainian government would have reversed course and pursued the association agreement with the European Union. Russia, however, ensured that Kiev would chart a strictly pro-EU course by occupying Crimea days after Yanukovych left the country. Ukraine’s foreign policy unequivocally turned away from Russia and embraced the EU. On March 5th 2014, the Rada introduced legislation to repeal Ukraine’s non-aligned status and declare NATO membership a central tenet of its

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<sup>274</sup>Allison, “Russian ‘Deniable’ Intervention,” 1256.

<sup>275</sup>Reiber, “Geopolitical Games,” 338.

national security strategy, an unambiguous rejection of Russian interests.<sup>276</sup> In June 2014, Ukraine's new President, Petro Poroshenko, formally signed the EU Association Agreement, officially committing Ukraine to deepened cooperation with the European Union.<sup>277</sup>

Ukraine's first full scale round of elections following Yanukovich's withdrawal from power resulted in a resounding victory for pro-European factions. Poroshenko's faction, the Petro Poroshenko Bloc, secured the greatest share of the vote, followed by the People's Front party of pro-independence politician Arseny Yatseniuk (who was serving as Prime Minister), and another pro-European party, the nationalist Self Reliance party, was third.<sup>278</sup> The landslide victory for pro-European forces was undoubtedly aided by the fact that the regions of Ukraine most likely to return Russia-oriented candidates did not participate in the election—Crimea because of its annexation by Russia, and the Donbass due to the Russian-sponsored separatists controlling the region rather than the Kiev government.

Ukraine's dramatic realignment toward the European Union can thus be attributed to Russia twice over. Any economic incentives Ukrainian nationalists had to maintain relations with Russia were erased by Moscow's seizure of Crimea and support for the armed revolt against the government. Those same Russian actions, meanwhile, removed the faction naturally inclined to support maintaining strong ties with Russia from the polity. There is, however, evidence that Russia's aggressive behavior has disillusioned non-nationalist Russophone Ukrainians as well. Local coalitions of Russophones in east Ukraine outside of the Donbas have cooperated with Kiev's efforts to maintain control of the region, and the results of the October 2014 election seem to indicate a consensus between these factions and western nationalists determined to defend Ukrainian

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<sup>276</sup>Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention 1272.

<sup>277</sup>"Ukraine Takes One Step Closer to EU," *Deutsche Welle*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/ukraine-takes-one-step-closer-to-eu/a-17737239>.

<sup>278</sup>Richard Balmforth, "Pro-Europe Parties Secure Big Election Win in Ukraine," *Reuters*, October 26, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/26/us-ukraine-crisis-election-idUSKCN0IF00R20141026>.

independence and resist Russian influence.<sup>279</sup> Further time and study are necessary to determine the strength of this consensus and its prospects for long term endurance.

The confirmation of a domestic consensus supporting Ukraine's ambition to join the European Union ensured the continuation of pro-Western policies. Poroshenko reiterated Ukraine's interest in joining NATO in November 2014, announcing plans to hold a referendum on seeking membership in the alliance.<sup>280</sup> At the December 2014 ratification ceremony of the EU-Ukrainian Association Agreement in Warsaw, Poroshenko announced a reform program aimed at preparing Ukraine to join the European Union by 2020.<sup>281</sup> He has actively engaged EU heads of state and government, and the European Council throughout the crisis, seeking support and reaffirming Ukraine's commitment to the European Union.

As a result of the changes in domestic Ukrainian politics, Moscow has transformed Russian strategy in the competition. Russia apparently recognized that its previous objective of exercising dominant influence over the Ukrainian government had moved out of reach. Putin officially burned all remaining political bridges between Moscow and Kiev, announcing that all bilateral agreements between the two countries were voided by the supposed coup against Yanukovich.<sup>282</sup> Aware that the new government in Kiev is staunchly committed to the EU—and unlike previous Ukrainian regimes, comparatively free of domestic political divisions capable of being exploited by Moscow—Russia now seeks instead to constrain Ukraine's strategic options by creating a frozen conflict. At the September 2014 Minsk peace summit Russia demanded a federalized Ukraine, with significant autonomy for the separatist-controlled eastern region.<sup>283</sup> Moscow's objective for this arrangement is to deny the pro-EU government in

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<sup>279</sup>Socor, "Kremlin's Policy Boomerangs With Ukraine's Parliamentary Election Results."

<sup>280</sup>"Ukraine to hold NATO Vote When Membership Criteria Are Met," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, November 24, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30176256>.

<sup>281</sup>Ed Adamczyk, "Poroshenko: Ukraine in EU by 2020," *UPI*, December 18, 2014, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2014/12/18/Poroshenko-Ukraine-in-EU-by-2020/1401418925883/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/12/18/Poroshenko-Ukraine-in-EU-by-2020/1401418925883/)

<sup>282</sup>Allison, "Russian 'Deniable' Intervention," 1265.

<sup>283</sup>Socor, "Kremlin's Policy Boomerangs With Ukraine's Parliamentary Election Results."

Kiev the ability to control the entirety of its territory, make Ukrainian membership in the EU impossible through the creation of an autonomous federal unit permanently opposed to membership, and gain Russia limited influence over the whole country through proxies elected from the Donbass.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

The diverse identities and interests of Ukraine's population have guided the country to conduct pragmatic diplomacy with the European Union and Russia, seeking close and productive ties with both yet committing to neither. Ukraine's foreign policy in turn shaped the competitive strategies of Brussels and Moscow. The EU and Russia both sought to bring Ukraine into their respective political and economic systems. Inevitably, the competition escalated to the point that circumstances demanded a decisive choice. The crisis beginning in November 2013 has resulted in a fundamental shift in Ukraine's role in the competition between the EU and Russia, and in the competition itself. Ukraine has forged a pro-Western political consensus and announced its unreserved interest in joining the European Union. Russia has given up on its previous strategy of bringing Ukraine as a whole into its sphere of influence and has instead seized control of its vital interests in the country, either directly or via support for separatist proxies. Specific policies resulting from the Ukrainian pro-EU consensus have yet to manifest themselves at the time of this writing. It is also as yet unclear how successful Russia will be in seeking to stymie Ukrainian aspirations to integrate with the EU. It is certain, however, that Ukraine's role in the competition has changed, and that a return to the balanced and pragmatic policies of the past is no longer an option.



## V. CONCLUSION

The territory that comprises modern Ukraine has been the object of many competitions throughout history. Long considered the birthplace of Russian civilization and often within the Russian polity, parts of the land also saw rule by the Mongols, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria-Hungary before the emergence of an enduring Ukrainian state. A distinct Ukrainian identity claims status and historical standing equal to that of Russia, but only recently has Ukraine achieved political autonomy.

Ukraine's first two and a half decades of independence from Russia have led the strongest partisans of Ukrainian nationalism to seek closer ties with the European Union. The European Union's decades of enlargement and outreach have brought its eastern edge to the borders of Ukraine, inevitably making the country an object of interest and opportunity to Brussels. Despite Ukraine's independence, however, the country's population cannot be considered unified in its cultural or political identity. Significant swaths of the Ukrainian citizenry, especially in the eastern regions, maintain strong ties to Russia and show little affinity for the European Union. Russia, meanwhile, has never lost interest in Ukraine, regarding it as a key part of Russia's own identity, a strategic asset in military and geographic terms, and an essential element in Moscow's plans to exert regional economic and political domination.

The European Union's 2003 European Security Strategy asserted an aspiration to create a "ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union."<sup>284</sup> In pursuit of this goal, the EU has structured its diplomacy to encourage its neighbors, including Ukraine, to adopt the EU's political norms and its legal structure, the *acquis communautaire*. Russia, however, has spurned participation in EU engagement programs and has sought to build a regional sphere of influence in which power emanates from Moscow. Russia has asserted various interests in Ukraine, but its geopolitical ambitions are the prime drivers behind the competition for influence in the country. Since Ukraine's

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<sup>284</sup>European Council, "A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy," European Union (2003): 8, [http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article\\_3087\\_en.htm](http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_3087_en.htm).

attainment of independence in 1991, these dynamics have driven the European Union toward steadily intensifying competition with the Russian Federation over which power will have greater influence in Kiev.

Ukraine's position as a state bordering the eastern-most members of the European Union demands consideration by Brussels in the formulation of EU foreign policy. Ukraine, situated directly between the EU and Russia, figures importantly in the EU's strategy of creating stable, liberal states on its periphery to insulate the core from security risks. The successful installation of enduring liberal norms in Ukraine would validate the credibility of the EU's soft power and its multilateral diplomacy. The EU also has growing economic interests in Ukraine, especially in the realm of energy. Over time, these interests have drawn the EU into seeking ever deeper cooperation with Ukraine.

EU-Ukrainian relations had an inauspicious start, but have grown steadily over the decades. After Ukraine gained independence, the EU had no official delegation to the country for over two years. However, since the establishment of relations in 1993, the EU has committed to the implementation of ever deeper formalized programs of cooperation. This cooperation has taken many forms: the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement in 1994, the European Neighborhood Program in 2004, the Eastern Partnership in 2009, and the culmination to date: the Association Agreement signed in 2014. The 2014 Association Agreement concluded by Ukraine and the EU is especially significant considering that it took place in the context of an ongoing, active military intervention in Ukraine by Russia.

The European Union has not always been aware of its role as a participant in a competition with Russia. As this thesis has shown, early EU diplomacy with Ukraine was characterized by a "take it or leave it" approach—hardly the mark of an aggressive courtship. When the prospect of competition with Russia was raised, it often served to dampen Brussels' enthusiasm for deepening ties with Ukraine. Yet as the European Union's relations with, and investment in, Ukraine have expanded, it has become more willing to overtly compete with Russia for influence. Since the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in November 2013, the European Union's diplomatic communiques have repeatedly condemned Russia's behavior, and the 28 member states have leveled several

rounds of punitive sanctions. There has been a marked shift in the attitudes of EU elites toward Russia as a result of the crisis. Once Moscow was a strategic partner, but it is now a strategic problem.

Russia, on the other hand, has demonstrated a steady strategic commitment to securing Ukraine within Moscow's sphere of influence. Moscow has consistently sought to use Russian-dominated international institutions to encourage Kiev to adopt policies favorable to Russia, and Moscow has a demonstrable track record of manipulating energy policies to strong arm Ukraine into aligning with Russian interests. The events following the European Union's November 2013 Vilnius Summit make Russia's commitment to its strategic goals in Ukraine evident: when economic and energy incentives failed to ensure a pro-Moscow government in Kiev, Russia escalated its tactics to active armed intervention.

Since its attainment of independence, Ukraine has not been a passive pawn in the competition between Brussels and Moscow. Ukrainian political and cultural identities and economic realities within the country have historically driven Kiev to seek cooperation with both the EU and Russia, and to attempt to avoid antagonizing either. Seeking membership in the European Union was the official policy of the Kuchma, Yushenko, and Yanukovich presidencies. Ukraine's foreign policy during this period also demonstrated an awareness of the importance of Russian trade, and especially Russian energy resources, and until the 2013 crisis avoided irrevocably damaging relations with Moscow. Yanukovich's abrupt withdrawal at the EU's Vilnius summit was driven in part by the fact that Moscow made clear to him that signing an Association Agreement with the EU would constitute an unacceptable challenge to Russian interests. Yanukovich's February 2014 decision to flee the country, thereby leaving Ukraine in the hands of pro-Western domestic forces, began a new phase for Ukraine's role in the competition between the EU and Russia. As shown in this thesis, Kiev has firmly aligned with the European Union and is now engaged in a conflict with separatists acting as proxies for Russia in the east of the country. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has openly rejected Russia's strategy to pursue its interests through separatist proxies in an autonomous Donbass, announcing in April 2015 that "Federalization is like an infection,

a biological weapon which they are trying to impose from outside Ukraine . . . we will not allow it.”<sup>285</sup>

The growth of the European Union’s efforts to compete for influence in Ukraine has clashed directly with Russia’s longstanding dedication to securing Kiev within its sphere of influence. During the crisis since 2013, the European Union has demonstrated a willingness to directly oppose Russian actions, diplomatically condemning Moscow and enacting an escalating series of sanctions, which remain in place. As the European Union’s level of competition with Russia has increased, the competition itself has been transformed. Ukraine has committed itself to the EU’s camp and has ended its efforts to maintain a balance between Brussels and Moscow. Russia’s strategy has been transformed as well. The strategy to bring Ukraine within Russian-dominated systems such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) has been placed on hold. Moscow now acts to defend limited core interests such as its Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, and to deny Ukraine to the EU by demanding that Kiev enact political reforms that would empower separatists in east Ukraine—separatists that are controlled by Moscow.

The current high level of competition between the European Union and Russia is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. A series of peace protocol meetings in Minsk has failed to resolve the Ukraine conflict. In the deliberations for a new peace agreement, on 11 February 2015, Russia continued to demand a reformed, decentralized government that would politically empower pro-Russian separatists—an obvious continuation of Russia’s new competitive strategy.<sup>286</sup> Perhaps emboldened by the U.S. rhetoric of a “pivot” to the Asia-Pacific, and the economic instability within the Eurozone, Russia is unlikely to give up pursuit of its interests in Ukraine or to make strategic concessions to the European Union. None of the peace agreements has succeeded in ending the fighting in Ukraine’s civil war. The European Union appears committed to supporting Ukrainian

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<sup>285</sup>“Separatist Rebels reject Poroshenko’s Decentralization Referendum Proposal,” *Deutsche Welle* April 6, 2015, <http://www.dw.de/separatist-rebels-reject-poroshenkos-decentralization-referendum-proposal/a-18363884>.

<sup>286</sup>Andrew Rettman, “Leaders Agree Ukraine Ceasefire Ahead of EU Summit,” *EUObserver* February 12, 2015, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/127617>.

sovereignty and opposing Russia's intervention. While still unwilling to extend an invitation of EU membership to Ukraine, Brussels nonetheless has taken significant steps to cooperate with Kiev to resist Moscow, as shown in Chapter II of this thesis. As recently as May 10, 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel, who often serves as a de facto negotiator for the European Union, called the annexation of Crimea "criminal and illegal, under international law," while speaking at a ceremony commemorating the anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Moscow.<sup>287</sup> The EU is revising its overall competitive strategy as well. In March 2015 the European Commission released a paper acknowledging the "shortcomings" of the European Neighborhood Policy and calling for the policy to be restructured to better appeal to the European Union's neighbors in the face of competing challenges.<sup>288</sup>

Ukraine has become a battleground in a greater debate over which norms will prevail in the European—and global—security environment. At stake are the liberal norms of democracy, multilateralism, partnership, and the rule of law that the EU is founded upon. Russia seems to have abandoned these principles in the Ukraine case, although it had promised to respect them under the Helsinki Final Act and the Budapest Memorandum. The growth of the European Union's commitment to compete with Russia over Ukraine indicates that the EU is willing to defend these values. It is more evident now than ever before that there is a deepening competition between the European Union and Russia, with Ukraine at the center.

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<sup>287</sup>Anton Troianovski, "Merkel Raps Putin Over Ukraine Conflict During Visit to Moscow," *Wall Street Journal* May 10, 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/merkel-raps-putin-over-ukraine-conflict-during-visit-to-moscow-1431273705>.

<sup>288</sup>High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, "Towards a New European Neighbourhood Policy," European Commission, March 3, 2015, 4, <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/consultation/consultation.pdf>.

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